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# THE RELUCTANT BACHELOR



# The Reluctant Bachelor

An Original Japanese Story

by KUNI SASAKI

Translated by

Kuni Sasaki and Jiro C. Araki

#### FIRST EDITION

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# THE RELUCTANT BACHELOR



### Chapter 1

#### PRELUDE

I had been concurrently the president of a reputable company and a Diet Member, the latter falling within the purview of the Purge Directive, and I was screened out as an undesirable person by the United States Occupation Forces. Now, I have nothing against the Occupation Forces. From the first I had been against the war, but after it broke out we had to try to win it. Naturally, I cooperated as well as I could. In any war, losers are always in the wrong, much more so in an unjustifiable war. As a matter of course we deserved severe punishment.

Having been deprived of my reputation, I returned to my native town, Tsuruoako, and am at present living in retirement. War or no war, I am now well on in years, and it is time I withdrew from active life. I do not resent my lot at all. Most Orientals in retirement follow the life of "working in the field in fine weather and reading at home in the rain," but being a born sluggard I hate to put my

hand to the plow.

First of all, I must tell you that I am a bachelor. I have never exchanged any wedding vows in my life. In this country such a private existence as mine seems to draw a good deal of public curiosity. They used to call me the Bach President or the Virgin M.P. On one occasion one of the popular magazines put my name on its graded list of screwballs. The staff of my company nicknamed me Old

Bookworm. But sometimes they called me President Maruzen [Maruzen is one of the biggest dealers in English, American and other foreign publications in Japan].

In due course you will come to know my murky past, but I was a teacher first and only later became a business man. My stay in America was for the purpose of majoring in English literature. One can never outgrow one's first love. It was right to call me a bookworm. Before the war I often took company money for transportation to Maruzen to look for new English and American publications. My full name is Zenzaburo Maruo, so "President Maruo Maruzen" is all

right. I liked the kidding.

Some people love books for reading and studying, others for their decorative value. In quite a few instances I had sadly stacked up my books and left them untouched. Being a busy president I had often sacrificed my evening hours transacting business over dinner in a teahouse. Moreover, unless you start reading a book as soon as you buy it, it is likely to be left unread. There were many such books in my study. My house in Tokyo was reduced to ashes during an air raid, but luckily the study I had built away from the main house was not damaged. Now free from worldly cares,

I can enjoy those books which were stowed away.

In England and America people like to write autobiographies when they find themselves at the top of the ladder. Owners of big trading firms, proprietors of hotels, presidents of companies, circus bosses and film stars alike, whose jobs have nothing to do with the pen, are driven by the desire to reveal their private lives by telling how they became successful. These stories are not like the biographies of great men; they are life histories of ordinary people, and we find much in common with them. I had collected a large number of biographies and autobiographies, thinking I might improve my personnel management by reading them. Also, I found them an excellent antidote for boredom. I spent so much time that my nephew, Kiyoshi, often says,

"You have always got your head stuck in a book, haven't

you, Uncle Zen?"

Kiyoshi is my eldest brother's only son and the present head of the family, which consists of himself, his wife and their three children. Their house is quite large, and I am very comfortable there. I live in an annex and have a maid to take care of me. During his college days Kiyoshi lived with me in my Tokyo house and naturally feels close to me. He understands me completely; however, he is still sceptical of my bachelorhood. While casually gossiping one day he sounded me out.

"You have too aesthetic an eye, haven't you, Uncle?"

"Why?"

"You impose too many conditions to be satisfied."

"What you mean is I'm not satisfied!"

"Well . . . "

"Seriously, Kiyoshi, you are talking about my staying

single all my life, aren't you?"

"That's about the size of it. Your standards are too high to be realized unless the girl is the fairest of the fair, and yet you want her to be a model housewife."

"That's not true. It's not that I don't like women. Quite

the contrary, in fact."

"What do you mean?"

"It's that women don't like me."

"Nonsense! You would get the blue ribbon in any horse show!"

"You are a bit too hard on me, aren't you?"

"No, that was meant to be a compliment, Uncle."

Kiyoshi seems to think my lot is the result of excessive nicety in choice. Another time, catching me in a good humor he said, "Uncle, Mom told me that you used to be chummy with Aunt Sagara. I mean Aunt Mitsuko, who married into the Sagara family from Shinmachi."

Now Shinmachi is the name of a street on which my

uncle Daisuke and his family used to live.

"Yes, as we were cousins, we were good friends."

"Aunt Mitsuko also adored you, didn't she?"

"Couldn't tell, for I was so used to being jilted."

"No, I thought of it the other day. During my school days, whenever I returned home from Tokyo on vacation, Aunt Mitsuko used to ask me about you."

"What did she say?"

"She said you had become a great success in life. It was when you had been made a director of the company. She never failed to ask me to give her love to you."

"That's not unusual. We had been friends from child-

hood, and she had a loving disposition."

"You inquired, too, after Aunt Mitsuko, Uncle."

"Did I?"

"Yes, when I was telling you how I had left my folks in the country, you asked me casually if Aunt Mitsuko was in good health, I remembered then to give you her message."

"It wasn't only about Aunt Mitsuko. I asked you about

the others, too, didn't I?"

"No doubt you did, but I remember I wondered why you asked me about her so much."

"That was because she was so delicate as to die in her early 50's."

"How much older were you than she?"

"She was four years younger, if my memory serves me

right."

"Wasn't it three?" Kiyoshi was insistent. Osato, the affectionate *Joruri* heroine, was three years younger than her beloved husband.

"Might be five."

"You can't be that forgetful. I have definite proof that you were very fond of her."

"Why do you say that?" I asked lightly.

"Don't try to get out of it, Uncle. You admired some chrysanthemums that I'd raised and asked me to cut some for you the other day, didn't you?"

"I did."

"Soon after that came the autumn equinox, and I made a visit to the ancestral graveyard. To go to our graveyard you have to pass the Sagaras', you know. What did I see at Aunt Mitsuko's tomb?—the very same chrysanthemums. What can you say now, Uncle?"

"Oh, well." I gave up.

Kiyoshi seemed to think that I was a bachelor because of Mitsuko. But he soon changed his mind. After all, he knows my private life very well, having lived with me for three years. I take care of two middle-school children in Tokyo, orphan sons of two of my former employees. I used to supply \$50 a month to each of them, but the prices of commodities having soared ten- to twenty-fold nowadays, I have to put up \$150 a month for each now. Even this amount is not easy for me, since the monetary situation has become tight. As Kiyoshi works in a banking corporation, I once asked for his help. Noting my unusual care in making this remittance, he decided these two boys must be my lovechildren. He broached the subject in a roundabout manner.

"You cut a fine figure wherever you go, Uncle!"

"No! I cut a poor figure wherever I go."
"It can't be helped. You switched from education to business and from business to politics. A versatile genius, you were always out in front."

"However, I wish I'd stayed in education. I enjoyed

my teaching career most."

"A teacher's life is rather restricted, isn't it?" Kiyoshi

went on. He started counting on his fingers.

"It isn't a life of plenty, but a teacher can devote himself to his favorite study. How could he ask for more?"

"Is English literature that fascinating?"

"Yes, it's the greatest literature in the world."

"English literature deals a lot with love. As a result, most scholars in English literature indulge in free love, don't they?"

"The men who wrote English literary works and the men who study them are not the same. The latter are scholars who evaluate and criticize the contents of books. They are mainly modest people."

"But while studying they can be affected by what they

study, can't they?"

"Not necessarily. A psychiatrist need not go mad."

At my leg-pulling he was stuck for a word, momentarily, but he stubbornly continued the subject under discussion. He majored in political economy in college, but he had learned something of world literature in English lessons in high school.

"Byron had many love affairs, didn't he?"

"Yes, he began his romances at the age of fifteen. A genius is pre-matured, you might say. He was not only aristocratic in birth but quite handsome in person as well, which is more than you can say for some of our lady-killers. Many beautiful, talented women pursued him all his life."

"Wasn't Shelley usually in love, too?"

"Of course, poets are always passionate people. They are not at all average."

"How about Shakespeare? He looked like a man of strict

morals, didn't he?"

"Well, he wasn't baldheaded in the beginning. He fell in love with a woman eight years his elder when he was only eighteen and married her after a baby was born. Great dramatist that he was, he had his failings. He is said to have suffered from Ann Hathaway's jealousy all his life."

"Speaking of an older wife, I remember a certain great author—one of whose books I studied in high school—yes,

Rasselas it was."

"That's Johnson. Samuel Johnson was called 'the great moralist.' He was a fine man. I look upon him as a paragon of virtue and learning." I clarified my stand in a casual manner.

"Heine was called a love poet," Kiyoshi continued. Love was still on his mind, it seemed.

"He was a brilliant German," I added.

"Precisely! And so was Goethe, who devoted his whole

life to love, I've been told."

"That's true. Goethe is acknowledged as the number one champion of love in the world. We can say his was a life of romance."

"Quite naturally! He was a bachelor."

"No, he was married."
"Wasn't he single?"

"No, he got married when he was fifty, but after his wife died he began having affairs again. His motto was 'from beauty to beauty.' He was never faithful to one woman, but perhaps he was seeking for a perfect love. He had from twenty to thirty sweethearts during his lifetime. Marvelous, wasn't he?"

"Are you influenced by his free life?"

"You can't trip me up so easily. You might find some of

that definite proof you teased me with before."

Taking advantage of my good humor, Kiyoshi got down to cases. "By the way, Uncle, when I was living with you, a beautiful woman singer often called on you—a vocalist named Nobuko Yasui."

"Nobuko Yasui? Yes, I remember her."

"Thanks to your patronage, she became famous, I hear."

"It wasn't only I. All of us old sinners got together to help her. She was a real beauty. Being the youngest of the group, I used to act as executive secretary. How swiftly time passes."

"We haven't heard of her lately. I wonder why."

"What has become of her, I wonder?"

"Maybe one of the old sinners made her his mistress."

"No, she got married and after that became less and less popular. I remember she came to say goodbye before she left for a goodwill trip to the Chinese front during the Incident. She may be doing well somewhere."

"You had another woman visitor—the proprietress of a

teahouse at Tsukiji. She, too, was beautiful."

"She used to come to collect the company's monthly bill by way of thanking me. You are extremely inquisitive about

women, Kiyoshi."

"Not necessarily. But Miss Yasui's name reminds me of the other woman. On one occasion those two ladies happened to meet in the drawing room. When the maid announced them, I went to take a peek."

"Aha, you've given yourself away, Kiyoshi."

"Both of them were so famous for their looks that I

couldn't resist the chance to see them."

"You must have acted pretty badly behind my back. Since I was too busy to supervise your conduct, I once told Fumiko that I shouldn't be held responsible for any misconduct of yours."

"You shouldn't have told her that, Uncle."

"Fumiko knows you once came home with a café bill collector."

"Well, bless my soul!"

"Don't worry. Any sin you committed during your school days is forgiven and forgotten. I can tell Fumiko anything now."

"Be careful or the children might get wrong ideas."

Through devouring autobiographies of ordinary people I felt impelled to try my hand at it. I had already been contemplating writing my personal history when Kiyoshi's in-

quisitiveness served as a further stimulant.

These Western public diarists are clever. While they openly disclose many of their failures, they are not frank in matters of love and marriage. All are successes. They married, had a happy home life and attributed what they became to their good wives. In nine out of ten cases the first page of these books is inscribed: "Dedicated to Mary [or Margaret or Joan], my life's partner." They invariably describe their romance with their wives, as though destiny had meant for them to be mated ever since the beginning of the world and as though the wives in question were their

first and only sweethearts. A romance or two must have existed before that, and who knows but that there was one later? Ordinary men are naturally bedeviled with strong passions, but they know enough to shut their mouths like clams about any love affair with other women. They are afraid of their wives.

"I can write anything I like—something that those fel-

lows could not do," I said to myself.

Bachelor that I am, I have no one to restrict my personal freedom of the press. I smiled at those grocers, watchmakers, circus owners and stockbrokers, autobiographers of mediocrity. How well they write within the confines authorized by their good wives. For reference I looked for some autobiographies of great men, but found that few great men wrote their own story because professional writers made it their business to write for them. Some of these ghost writers do a good job. I remembered one by Benjamin Franklin. In my effort to find it among a pile of books a big volume fell off and hit my instep hard. It was by Goethe.

"M...m... the champion of love," I murmured. The talk with Kiyoshi was still lingering in my mind. Having received an occult invitation to read it, it seemed, I put the

book on my desk.

The annex I occupy consists of two eight-tatami rooms, in one of which I store books. Into it I carried as many books as I could and stacked them up as high and wide as I could. My heart is full when I think these are the only movable property I have.

"You must miss your favorite collection of pictures and writings that were destroyed," Kiyoshi remarked, coming in to change the hanging picture on the alcove wall. He tries hard to please me. Fumiko, his wife, takes care of decorating

with flowers.

"I know you'll love this chrysanthemum," she will say as she brings one in to me. I feel as though I can be seen through; however, I am grateful for their effort in comforting their vanquished uncle. As both my elder brothers are dead, I am now the patriarch of the Maruo family; and they treat me as though I were their father. Kiyoshi, after coming home from the bank and finishing his dinner, comes to have a chat with me. We are as far apart in age as father and son, but we don't feel that difference. The uncle is unmarried and the nephew is the father of three children. Paternally I am his junior, so to speak. I have his children call me Uncle.

Fumiko scolded the children, "Don't say Uncle, say Grandpa."

"No, let them call me Uncle."

"But we call you Uncle. Great-uncle is really proper."

"That makes me feel too old, please let them call me
Uncle anyway."

"All right, if you like."

"How about Brother instead of Uncle?"

"That's going too far, isn't it?" Fumiko laughed.

One evening Kiyoshi happened to see the large book on my desk, and picked it up.

"It's the life story of Goethe, isn't it?" he asked.

"It is. Since we talked about him the other day I have started reading it. Goethe wrote an autobiography of sorts. This isn't that one, but it's very interesting."

"I might as well rub the rust off my English and read

some English books."

"Take any one you like and read it. You were good at English, weren't you?"

"I can read books on political economy in English."

"One shouldn't always stick to economics."
"But literature isn't the whole world, is it?"

"Civilization is a state of the world in which literature flourishes. Seen from a wider view, economics, philosophy and even natural science are only a part of literature."

"In other words, you mean literary men are the greatest."

"Of course they are. Whatever others may say, humankind is represented by literary men. Suppose the contact between earth and some other planets were realized. Neither politician nor economist would know what to do, nor could scientists do anything. After all, literary men alone would be able to communicate the state and life of human beings on earth to creatures of other planets."

"Your bragging is grand in conception. Almost over-

whelming, in fact.'

"It's not bragging; it's an established fact. Goethe eternally represents Germany. Germans may perish, but Goethe will live forever. After a thousand years you will have to use a magnifying glass to discover the names of Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolf Hitler in a biographical dictionary, but Goethe will fill up a whole page as will Shakespeare."

Kiyoshi, oblivious of what I was talking about, thumbed

through the pages.

"Goethe surely is a fine-looking man," he said, squinting

at his portrait.

"He was not only very handsome but a genius and a blueblood. His attraction for women must have been very strong. He had recorded love affairs with ten women before his legal marriage. There must have been quite a few unrecorded ones besides. To a certain woman he showed his yearning by writing 1,000 love letters. In almost all cases there were rivals—not for the hand of the woman but for the heart of Goethe."

"He was both lionized and idolized by women, wasn't he?"

"He must have been kept busy with his love affairs, and yet he wrote masterpieces. Indeed he must have been a man of untiring energy. For ten years, after he married at the age of fifty-eight, he gave up his love affairs. However, after his wife died, he started again. When seventy-four he fell in love with a certain *Fräulein*. His lover too was in earnest. As she was called *Fräulein*, she must have been young and unmarried. He was quite serious about marrying her. He must have been biologically young at seventy-four!"

"Amazing, isn't it. He was ten years older than you are

now, Uncle.

"So I may still look forward to a promising future."

"Surely. It's too early for you to think of yourself as old."
"However, Goethe didn't marry the *Fräulein*, partly because of public opinion. He thought it better not to get married and so they parted. But there was another one after that."

"Dear me!"

"This one, too, was fervently in love with him, it is said."
"By the way, Uncle."

"What?"

"Considering Goethe's age, you aren't too old to marry. Why don't you make up your mind to find a wife?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"It's no joke, Uncle. I am in earnest."

"Have you anybody in mind?"

"No, not now, but as soon as you agree, I will look out for one."

"Deliver me from a marriage by a matchmaker. I want romance."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, you talk like a playboy!" Kiyoshi looked shocked.

In the wake of Western forerunners I intended to write the story of my insignificant life, when Goethe's romantic life made me remember my past romances. I, too, have a history of the heart from adolescence up to the present. Ordinary people are more easily tossed about on the waves of passion, so there is plenty of material at hand. My predecessors stressed their official lives and gave only a glimpse of their private lives. I intend to make mine the reverse. I will aim at writing a history of the heart. Being a bachelor, I have no wife to fear. I took pleasure in reading novels during the time I was studying the English language. I preferred prose to poetry. Although I have had no experience in writing fiction, I am not an absolute greenhorn. I was a critic in English literature in my lectures. All novels are, so to speak, histories of the heart. Novels treat of the

passions of ordinary men. The first English novelist, Henry Fielding, set an example in his *Tom Jones*. The great masterpiece of modern times, Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, is a history of the heart of its hero, Jude. I don't mean to compete with those immortal writers, but I do want to make use of my forced leisure time by writing the history of my heart.

### Chapter 2

#### LIFE IS FULL OF FOLLIES

Looking back upon my past, I often fall into a reverie of ifs, such as: if at that time things hadn't been like that, what would have happened to me? I might have found

myself in an absolutely different position.

For instance, I was a victim of the Purge Directive. I had been affected by only the narrowest margin. It's true that I was a company president, but the business itself was not big enough to be an object of the Directive. If I had been away from Tokyo on a trip, I wouldn't have been on the committee of that association and therefore would have escaped purge consideration. A friend of mine who was much more important than I was critically ill at the time and, as luck would have it, he was not purged. Even though I was a committee member of the association, if I had been. . . . No. Regret won't change what has happened. Yet my imagination runs wild once in a while.

Among many ifs, if I had not been born is the biggest. Were there no birth, no existence, no passion, there would be no need for writing a history of the heart. If we could

philosophize about this biggest *if* and soar above this world, we would be free from all cares and attain the spiritual

peace of Buddha. But mediocrity is mediocrity.

The next to the biggest *if* probably is, If my father had not married my mother—if he had married someone else—I might not have been born; if born, I might have had absolutely different looks and character and my birth would probably have taken place on a different day from my actual birthday. And, terrifying thought though it is, I might even have been a girl!

However, these ifs are woolgathering fantasies. We who are born in this world cannot make the slightest deviation

from our destined course.

The ifs under present consideration must also have had their footholds on earth. There are a lot of ifs in the latter category but, if I had not been expelled from middle school when I was a third grader:—this might be the if that made the most radical change in my life's course. If I had graduated from middle school in my home town, I might have gone on to a high school under the former system and finally to the Imperial University, where I might have majored in jurisprudence. Japan fifty years ago was completely under bureaucratic dogmatism. Even in presentday democratic Japan, the government-above-people notion is still prevalent among the majority. I believe I would have applied for the Higher Civil Service examination and become a civil officer in the government service. Who knows but that I might have served with distinction in the government and have been sentenced as an A-class war criminal?

Byron fell in love when he was fifteen. I wrote a love letter to a girl student when I was fifteen. As Japanese count their age by calendar years, I was only fourteen according to Western chronology, so in precocity I beat the English poet. In Eastern countries the fourteenth year is the age of discretion. At that age one is legally responsible. As I was fourteen and some months old then, I didn't mind being

held responsible, but expulsion from school was too severe. Even though a boy of fifteen might propose to a girl of the same age, it would rarely ever develop into a marriage—it would be only a caprice of the moment. And I didn't slip that letter in her kimono sleeve. I sent it postage paid through government facilities—the post-office. She, a girl of beauty and talent, and I, a conceited boy prodigy, would undoubtedly make a most admirable couple. This I seriously believed, a conviction commonly incidental to adolescence at the awakening of puberty. Life is full of follies, and this was the first folly of my life.

In such a case an intelligent educator would have reproved the boy with the warm heart and might have given him some light punishment. But my principal expelled me from school instantly without taking any pains to make me repent and mend my ways. Unfortunately, the girl who captivated me, Kiyoko-san, was the daughter of a prefectural assemblyman. Her imperious father opened the letter, stormed into the school in a rage, and made the principal expel me. An assemblyman has great influence over the principal of a middle school. If hated by him, the principal might lose his position. On the other hand, my father was a bank manager and had no public office, so he could bring no pressure to bear on the principal. He went to see him to offer an apology for my conduct but was denied an interview.

What I had done was an undeserved reflection on my parents. Mother cried. I felt like crying, too, but father proved himself a better educator than the principal. My brothers, Kosuke and Tsunejiro, stood by me.

"Zenzaburo, I shan't reproach you any more. Your mother will forgive you and I feel sure you're not a fool. You should know what your parents are thinking. Forget

everything."

"Yes, Dad."

"Kosuke slapped you, but you shouldn't hold it against him."

"I don't, Dad, not in the least. I know I was in the

wrong."

"I'd meant to have you give up your education, but Kosuke and Tsunejiro got together and begged me to reconsider. So I have changed my mind. This is a great, big world. Go to Tokyo, forget everything and work hard."

By now I was really blubbering.
"Be a man and don't cry!" said Dad.

"Zenzaburo," Tsunejiro interrupted cheerfully, "I'll get our revenge on the principal. The moon isn't lit every night!" (threatening words meaning an attack from ambush).

"Don't be foolish, any of you boys," Dad snapped.

"Don't worry, Dad. I'll be very careful."

"Never mind, Tsunejiro," Kosuke came up with an idea. "We'll start an expulsion agitation against him." After all he, too, was clannish and had slapped me only in a fit of temper.

Kosuke, the oldest, had graduated several years earlier and was working for a bank. Tsunejiro, about two years older than I, was in the fifth year class then and was of an adventurous nature. He was very angry about the trouble I was in and was talking of attacking the principal in the dark. He called on the teacher in charge of my class every day, asking for help and made sure that the whole teaching staff was in sympathy with me. The principal alone was hard-boiled about the matter.

I was in the wrong. There was no doubt about it, but the principal lacked a sense of fairness. The extremely harsh punishment was not for the sake of education but for his self-preservation. Tsunejiro discarded the idea of revenge, but in later years the judicial authorities had my revenge on him, which fact shows how undesirable an administrator he was as a middle-school principal. There arose what was then called the Text Book Scandal, in which many principals of middle schools, normal schools and even the Vice-Minister of Education were involved. It involved nation-wide bribery by some of the text book publishers. The matter was

extensively reported in the papers. The principal in question was implicated and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. As a matter of course he was blacklisted in educational circles. It was about this time that Tsunejiro enclosed one yen in a letter to me, saying that I should buy some food at the prison caterer's and present it to the principal in my name. Thus by returning good for evil I could have even more striking revenge than we had planned originally.

In this manner I was deported from the country to Tokyo and now, fifty years later, was re-deported from Tokyo to the country. Of course, during that period I returned home on many occasions, but this time it is for good. Life in one's home town is nice after all. I have many relatives. Some surviving boyhood chums called on me unexpectedly.

When I was riding on a rickshaw the other day, the rickshaw-man turned to me and said, "Sir, you are Zenza-

buro-san, of the Maruo family, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am, and who are you?"

"I am Kametaro Miki, your classmate in primary school." "My! My! Is that you, Kame-chan? What a surprise!"

"I was wondering if it wasn't you, Zen-chan."

"Haven't seen you for years. It's really fifty years, isn't it? Quite possibly you have had the advantage of me.

Congratulations on your going as strong as ever!"

"No, I'm not an object of congratulations. My son was killed at the front. I started working at this lowly job to support my grandchildren. It's not an easy one for an old man like me."

"I'm sorry to hear it."

"I have another son, and we are looking forward to his homecoming. How about your folks, are they all right?"

"I'm the only one."

"You mean you've lost your only son? Was it in the South, too?"

"No, I mean I'm all alone. No wife, no child." "Is that so? Well, I must tell you I'm a bit surprised to hear it."

The town is so small that I cannot walk down the street without seeing one or two familiar faces. Waking up with a toothache one day, I decided to go to see the dentist, Dr. Isokawa. He had been a schoolmate in middle school, but I had not yet renewed our old friendship. Thinking a surprise call would be more fun, I had not even 'phoned him that I was coming. In the waiting room I found an old lady reading a newspaper with a pair of big spectacles. I had brought a book, too, to kill time in case I should be kept waiting.

As it had been raining for days, I said, trying to be

sociable, "It has been a long rainy spell, hasn't it?"

The old lady only mumbled a few words. She appeared to have no teeth, for her cheeks were hollow and her lips had the flabby, rubbery look of a toothless old crone. She had probably come to get back her full set of false teeth, which Dr. Isokawa had repaired. I started reading. However, nobody was called in.

"What a long time he is keeping us waiting!" I murmured. The old lady somehow managed to tell me that the dentist wasn't at home right then. Soon another patient

came in, and at last the dentist returned.

"Oh, how are you, Zen-chan? Glad to see you've come back home."

He recognized me at once, for we hadn't been separated for fifty years. We had seen each other about ten years earlier. He showed us in upstairs where his clinic was. I told him to see the old lady first. While treating her he began to talk to me. Unlike poor Kame-chan, although his two sons had been mobilized, both were safe at home. The older one was helping his father in his work. He told me his house had been burned down about six years ago, but things then weren't as bad as now. He rebuilt the house and replaced his dental instruments, which turned out to be a most fortunate move. I told him how I had been purged and had come home to stay. In the meantime the old lady's false teeth were securely back in her mouth and she could talk properly. Getting down from the chair, she went out, nodding good-bye to me.

"Did you talk to that old lady while you were in the

waiting room?" asked my friend.

"No, I didn't."

He went to the top of the staircase and came back, having seen the elderly patient down the stairs. Then he burst out laughing.

"What's so funny?" I asked quickly.

"That's the girl you sent your famous love letter to!"

"Really? Is she Kiyoko-san?"

"Indeed she is! She is now a widow. At first I didn't remember but, while adjusting her false teeth and talking with you, it flashed into my mind. It was all I could do to keep from laughing."

"What a shock!"

"Surely she recognized you, as she bowed to you politely when she left."

"We talked so much that anyone could have identified me. But what a homely old lady she has turned into!"

"Even a beauty cannot fight against age."

"What a disillusionment!"
"Does your tooth ache?"

"Not now, but one of my molars has fallen out."

"That's age, too. Let me see."

"Was she really Kiyoko-san? I still can't believe it!" I sat down bravely in the dentist chair, my mind crowded with thoughts of my middle-school days fifty years ago.

### Chapter 3

#### TO TOKYO

I had no relatives in Tokyo. It was too risky for a young boy like me to travel alone, so my father decided to send my eldest brother, Kosuke, along with me. It was not an easy trip. In those days transportation in the country was not as good as now. We had to walk one whole day to reach the nearest railway station. In Tokyo we counted on a man named Yukichi, whose tailor shop had been patronized by my father while he was in the country. He lived at Shirokane, Shiba-ward, where he operated his small business. We went to his house without notifying him, but Yukichi and his wife welcomed us warmly. His wife was also from our town.

"Frankly, Yukichi-san, this boy has gotten into trouble and been expelled from school. I brought him up here to put him in some Tokyo middle school. Do you know of one? Any one will do."

My brother spoke plainly about the object of our

unexpected journey.

"There is Shirokane Gakuin (Institute) nearby. It is my business to make the pupils' uniforms. You see the signboard outside, 'Contract Tailor for Shirokane Gakuin.'"

"Are you sure it's a middle school?"

"It's a middle school all right. They have a higher one and a still higher one over that. It's a mission school. Many foreigners are teaching there."

The words mission school were new to both of us. They

sounded high-toned to our country ears.

"What is meant by a mission school?"

"It's a Yaso school."

"I don't mind Yaso or anything else, so long as they accept my brother."

Yaso (Christians) were held in general contempt, but

with us it was a matter of urgency, not of principle.

"I know the director well. I shall tell him of Zen-chan's case and ask his help."

"Don't tell him the boy was expelled."

"I'll fix it up tactfully."

"His school record isn't bad."

"I'll tell him he likes English so much that he is eager to learn it from foreigners. That's why he has come to Tokyo."

"That will sound plausible enough."

My teacher-in-charge had given me a letter of introduction to the teacher of a private middle school in Kanda, but we were lost in this huge metropolitan city. I was amazed at the vast expanse of Tokyo when I rode on a rickshaw from Ueno to Shirokane. I shuddered at the thought of finding the middle school in Kanda. Whether they would accept me was doubtful, even though I applied for admission. Moreover, the teacher-in-charge revealed that the school wasn't too good. While we were being overly cautious about what school suited me best, a mission school popped up near at hand. I saw no reason why I need hesitate about requesting admission.

Yukichi was operating his cosy shop with only a boy apprentice. He treated us to eel-rice and tempura soba (buckwheat vermicelli with fried prawns) for dinner. He persuaded my brother to stay as long as he could and do the sights of Tokyo. The conversation followed its natural course, and we ended gossiping about our home town. Yukichi, who wasn't as fond of the country as his wife, said he hated the narrowness of community life in a country

town.

"Life in Tokyo is great," said Yukichi. "At Tsuruoka it

was just like having our name tags hanging around our necks. Wherever I went they called me Yukichi, but here in Tokyo, the minute I step over the threshold they call me master. Even the rickshaw men hail me, saying 'Master, take a rickshaw.' At Tsuruoka we find ourselves swimming around in a small pond; struggle as we may, we can't grow our tails and fins. But in Tokyo we can become giant denizens of the deep. Blessed with ability and good luck, there is no limit to our growing."

"Quite right! My best success in the country may be to

become president of a small bank!" Kosuke exclaimed.

"If I were doing just as I am doing now in the country, they would say, 'Yukichi has at last begun to earn his living!' They would call me Yukichi as if I were a servant."

"What name do they address you by here in Tokyo?"

"They call me Master, not Yukichi. They say, 'The Master had been doing a big business downtown but had his shop burnt down. What a pity!' They don't know that I left my home town because I was unable to earn a living there."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha. Doesn't your local accent give you away?"

"By no means! Not like downtown—the people who live

around here are mostly country folks."

"By the way, Yukichi-san. Pardon, I mean Mr. Tailor. Is

your business prospering?"

"Yes, thanks to the season. At the beginning of a school year I always feel snowed under. Look at all of those uniforms hanging there, every one of them waiting for the first fitting."

"Do you make only uniforms?"

"No, I am a general tailor, making suits, overcoats and other clothes."

"To celebrate coming to Tokyo, I may as well have a winter suit made," Brother said.

"A suit is all very good, but how about a frock coat. I could make a month's living from it."

"What! Do you make so much?"

"Yes, it depends on the way I make it. But I'll give you my best price. If you have it made in the country you will have to pay fifty yen for an ordinary one."

"How much do you charge me for an ordinary one?"

"But as I use the best quality. . . . "

"How much is it?"

"Well, I'll charge you only forty-seven yen. The story of the famous Forty-Seven Loyal Ronins just occurred to me."

"That is a fancy price indeed."

"No, Sengakuji, the temple where those Loyal Ronins' tombstones stand is quite near. I was thinking of taking you there first in doing the sights of Tokyo. So I'll cut down the price from fifty yen to forty-seven yen, paying respect to the spirit of the Loyal Ronins."

"Aren't you raising the price from forty-five to forty-

seven, paying respect to the spirit of Loyal Ronins?"

"It's no joke, Mr. Maruo. If you insisted on my making it at thirty-five yen, I would make it for that and it would look good at first but would soon get out of shape."

"Then I will venture to spend forty-seven yen for an

extra good frock coat."

"Splendid, Mr. Maruo." Yukichi immediately spread out some swatches. I can remember when two or three yen were considered quite a sum. The railway fare from home to Tokyo, covering 120 miles, was less than three yen.

"If I am lucky enough to get you to make a uniform, how happy I shall be, Yukichi-san," I chipped in.

"Truly, that must be fixed up before a frock coat," my

brother said with a straight face.

Yukichi seemed to take the whole matter lightly. His trumped up excuse that I left home in my urgent desire to learn English from foreigners and his confidence that Shirokane Gakuin would be pleased to admit me eased our fears somewhat.

"But won't they ask me why I quit school in the middle

of the school year?" I almost blurted out what I was most afraid of revealing. When I thought of this, the gleam of hope disappeared. If I had been expelled from school on account of a quarrel with a schoolmate or playing the ringleader in a school strike, it would have sounded fine, but it would be embarrassing to say that I wrote a love letter to a girl.

"You might just say you quit school for the sole purpose of learning English from foreigners. That will be all right."

My brother was more reasonable and honest. He said, "I think it's better to tell the truth because his case isn't a transfer but an application for admittance."

The very next morning I went to Shirokane Gakuin with

Yukichi.

"Fine school, isn't it? All those foreign-style houses are occupied by foreigners. That one is the chapel, and the big building over there is the dormitory. Don't you think they're very different from country middle schools?" Yukichi said this proudly, as if the school were his own property.

"I hope they will accept me."

It wasn't architecture but admission that I was worrying about.

"Don't worry. I'm sure they will."

"The principal of the middle school department being absent, we were interviewed by the director of the institute, with whom Yukichi seemed well acquainted.

"I have a special favor to ask of you, Mister Director,"

he said as soon as he took me into the director's office.

"Does the boy want to enter this school?" asked the director.

I am naturally affected by personal appearances. Hadn't the beauty of a young schoolgirl brought about my present predicament? The director's strong physique impressed me so much that I thought he must be a great man.

"Yes, sir, in his eagerness to learn English from foreigners he left the middle school in his town and has come to

Tokyo," Yukichi began.

"What grade?"

"He is a third grader. He will be happy if you admit him in the third grade."

"There must be some reason to have left school in the

middle of the school year."

"No other reason except learning English from. . . . "

"Let me ask you, my young sir," the director said, turning to me, "haven't you done something wrong?"

"Yes, I was expelled from school, sir."

I made up my mind to make a clean breast of it and rely on his generosity.

"How was your school record? I mean, when you were

promoted from the second to the third grade."

"I was among the A's, sir."

"What was your rank in the class?"

"Second, sir."

"When you were a first grader?"

"Also second, sir."

"And yet you have been expelled from school?"

"Yes, on the spur of the moment I...."

"All right. Say no more!"
"I think I really ought. . . ."

"And when the matter is referred to your school it's understood that they will reply that you withdrew from

school for family reasons?"

"That's the way it is arranged, sir," I straightened up in spite of myself because he had guessed it exactly right. I thought all the schools in Japan were in touch with each other, and my case had already reached this school.

"No doubt you are sorry for what you've done?"

"Yes, I regret it very deeply, especially for having worried my parents, sir."

"Are your parents in good health?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were pardoned for what you did before you left home, weren't you?"

"Yes, my father told me, 'Forget everything and make a

fresh start in Tokyo,' sir."

"Did you come all by yourself?"

"No, sir, my brother came with me."
"Has your brother gone home?"

"No, sir, he's still here. We arrived here only yesterday."

"I want to see your brother before making the arrangements. I believe you've told me the truth, but I want to talk to your brother, too."

"Shall I be admitted, sir?"

"Don't worry. If you aren't, you'll be greatly handicapped, won't you?"

"I humbly request that you admit me, sir."

"Come back with your brother this afternoon. Thank you for your trouble, Yukichi-san."

The director bowed politely as he stood up to dismiss us.

That afternoon I went back with my brother and was admitted to the school. The reason I write so much in particular about an event of fifty years ago is that my impression at the time was so deep that I can't leave it unsaid. The principal of our native town did not mind a peremptory dismissal of a student of three years' standing for his first mistake, while the director of the Shirokane Gakuin accepted me unconditionally at our first interview. Knowing that I had been expelled from school, he dared not ask the reason. When I was about to tell it, he cut me short by "All right, say no more." What sympathetic consideration he showed! He dispensed with what I was most hesitant to tell. He knew I was sorry I had done wrong. That was all he wanted to know. I also was moved when the director addressed me as "My young sir." The teachers in the country used to say, "You, Maruo." The teachers were the officers and the pupils were their soldiers.

"Yukichi-san, Tokyo isn't the same as the country," I said. I was not referring to a comparison of topography but was thinking about the big difference between bureaucratic

education and democratic education.

Although I may be digressing I cannot lose this opportunity to tell you that the third grade into which I was admitted then graduated from school in the first year of the 20th century. Forty-odd years have elapsed since then, but the class enjoys a reputation of the highest standing. From that class came a galaxy of men of renown—a state minister, bank presidents, university professors, presidents of various companies, leading literary men and the present director of Shirokane Gakuin.

However strange it may sound, no soldier is included among us. This is an outstanding fact not only about our classmates but about all the alumni. In this institute democratic education was so thorough that none of the

graduates ever thought of becoming a soldier.

Uchida, who became a state minister, and Ogiwara, a well-known literary man, had both been expelled from a certain private middle school before they were admitted to the institute. At one of our class alumni parties I reported the very considerate treatment I had received by the then director, Matsuzaki.

"It was the same with Ogiwara and me. We were ousted from the Seisoku Middle School into the wide world. We were at a loss as to what to do, weren't we, Ogiwara?"

Uchida turned to the man of letters.

"Yes, if we had been in the junior grade, the matter might have been easy, but we were fourth graders. No school was willing to take us. We wandered about like dogs cast out, and at last on a rainy day we came to the Shirokane Gakuin. We were completely surprised when the director himself interviewed us." Ogiwara appeared to be quite emotional as he reminisced.

"We frankly told him the whole truth and begged to be admitted. The director said, 'What you have done doesn't matter to me a bit. But, are you sorry for it?' We weren't so foolish as to say 'No.' Ogiwara was literary even as a boy. He answered, 'I am so repentant that I have bitten my navel.' That was a Chinese expression."

"My memory is a little hazy here, but I do remember that he said 'Good, and now you must follow my instructions faithfully.' "Certainly we will, sir.' "He also said, 'Real education changes offenders into worthwhile members of

society."

"That's just what he said. Thanks to Dr. Matsuzaki, we offenders of the past have grown into what we are today, although we can't be very proud of our todays."

"How right you are. I'm thinking of paying homage to

his grave in Tama Cemetery one of these days."

"Yes, do let's go."

"How about having all the class go together?" someone suggested. It was unanimously approved. However, while we procrastinated for a couple of years, a great change came over Japan, our classmates became scattered, the state minister and presidents were all swept away by the Purge Directives and all are now obliged to be inactive.

# Chapter 4

### THE MISSION SCHOOL

Education is part and parcel of a history of the heart. I feel the same as Uchida and Ogiwara, for what I am today I owe solely to Shirokane Gakuin. One's Alma Mater is unforgettable, so let me tell you something about my school

days there.

The sudden change from an out-of-the-way provincial middle school to an American Mission School in Tokyo made me stare at everything I saw and heard. The first thing that puzzled me was the morning service. Every morning before school began the whole student body gathered in the chapel, sang hymns and said prayers, with either the director, a department principal or a foreigner reading from the Bible. Then we listened to Christian ser-

mons. I thought, of course, that this was the way a Yaso school was run, but I felt uneasy about being a participant, for hymns and sermons were entirely new to me.

"Though you are studying at a Christian school, don't turn into a Christian," my brother warned me before he

left for home.

Besides the service, to my surprise, the Bible was the textbook used for lessons in ethics. The school furnished me a Bible free of charge. It was the New Testament. I opened the first page and read:

CHAPTER I, The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; and Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar and Phares begat Esrom and Esrom begat Aram and Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Nasson and Nasson begat Salmon....

And so on and on. I could not make head or tail of it. "Good! I am quite safe. I can never be a Christian," I said to myself.

Also it was my first experience with dormitory life. A few days after Brother Kosuke went home I moved into the dormitory from Yukichi's house. I felt like a fish out of water at the beginning, but it was not long before I became reconciled to living in the dormitory. Ours was a three-boy arrangement, consisting of a study and a bedroom. In the study there was a big, six-foot-square table for the common use of the three boys. In the bedroom we slept in beds, which was a novelty to me. The building itself was a four-storied European style structure, with a tower in the middle, making it five stories. As man is affected by his environment, to a bumpkin who had never seen a bigger building than the three-storied police office in the country, the dormitory

was a big source of pride.

Of the three roommates, the room-master was a fifth year student, and the other was a classmate of mine. When we first met, I introduced myself and told them where I came from.

Ito, the room-master remarked, holding out his hand, "M-mn, you are from the Northeast. I'm from Kagoshima, Satsuma Province."

"And the bravest samurai in Sasshu Kagoshima," commented Takahashi, my classmate. I learned later that the folk dance called "The Bravest Samurai in Sasshu Kagoshima" was his favorite stunt. This samurai was destined to work in my company as a department head in later years. There are some people who remain childish all their lives, no matter how old they become. They use the square style writing learned in their primary school days and never try to write in a cursive style. Ito without doubt belonged to this group. Whenever a banquet was at its height, he would stand up, strike a pose and begin his stunt dance:

Don't you know who I am?
I'm the bravest samurai
In all Sasshu Kagoshima!
There are goblins and hobgoblins
Rampant at Tsuyama, I hear.
So I go, so I go
With a big sword at my waist.

I was bored with this dance innumerable times. He worked in my company just tolerably well until he reached retirement age and then returned to his home in Sasshu

Kagoshima.

Takahashi came from either Ibaraki or Tochigi, I do not remember which. He was, unlike Ito, the brilliant type. I was very much influenced by him when I first entered the school. He was a scholarship student. One evening I saw him fall on his knees by the bedside with his hands on his forehead.

"Have you a headache?" I asked, but there was no answer.

"He's saying his prayer before going to bed," Ito told me.

"Is he?" I asked.

"Aren't you a Christian?"

"No, I am not. And you?"

"Not I."

"May we remain non-Christian?"

"We are at liberty to believe in Christianity or not."

"But most of them in this school are Christians, aren't

they?"

"No, the majority of the pupils are not yet Christians. Among the boarders are sons of priests like Takahashi, but most of the day students are not yet Christians."

After a while Takahashi finished his prayer, and said

"You said, 'not yet Christians.' That is a step forward."

"Why do you say that?"

"Not yet Christians, when stated in reverse implies, will be Christian in due time."

"No, you can depend upon it. My mind is protected by an iron-walled golden castle against Christian attacks." He meant an impregnable fortress.

"With my prayer I will penetrate the iron-walled golden

castle."

"I can't believe your prayer can be that strong."

"Why?"

"Your prayer is only a Pharisee's prayer, because you were listening to our conversation just now," assailed Ito.

I was pleased with this iron-walled golden castle, for I now knew that there were others who were specifically avoiding Christianity. I liked Shirokane Gakuin very well, but the trouble was that I disliked Christianity.

As I was determined to turn over a new leaf, I worked hard for a while. It was lucky that I liked English. Taking lessons from foreigners was a novelty to me. I found a lot of interest in it, although I could not understand it well. There was a blonde beauty with bright eyes and nice teeth named Miss Mary Wainwright. She taught us English conversation twice a week. How beautiful foreign ladies were, I thought, and many a time I was lost in admiration of Miss Mary's striking appearance.

"How beautiful!"

The boy next to me heaved a sigh of admiration. I was glad to know there were other irrepressible boys besides me. Whenever Miss Mary had another engagement her sister, Miss Jane, who was almost her double, took her place. Mary was twenty and Jane was eighteen. One day Miss Jane said,

"Do you want. . . . Saturday afternoon?"

Nearly half the class frantically raised their hands without knowing what Miss Jane meant. It was only some time later that we found out she wanted to take several boys to a friend's concert in Tsukiji Saturday afternoon. Five boys were selected from among those who raised their hands and were taken to the concert. Takahashi was one of them.

Another day Miss Jane again announced in the class,

"Do you want. . . . Saturday afternoon?"

I immediately raised my hand before anyone else did. No matter what she meant, I was going to be first. However, this time it turned out not to be a concert. She meant to get a volunteer to mow the grass in her garden. It seemed that she had a new lawn mower which had just arrived from America. With some regret for my hasty response, I went to Miss Jane's the following Saturday afternoon and helped mow the grass. My luck wasn't all bad, though, for afterwards I was recognized by the sisters, who often pointed me out in the classroom and called me, "Mr. Maruo." Because I did not like to feel humiliated by giving wrong answers in class, I worked harder than ever before. Practice is the main thing in learning a language. My ears gradually opened and my tongue became smoother.

The beautiful sisters, Miss Mary and Miss Jane, were the talk of the neighborhood. Even Yukichi said, "There are

some beautiful imports in your school, aren't there?"

In the beginning I often visited Yukichi's house. He seemed proud of the association and was prepared to help me in every way possible. He occasionally treated me to tempura soba or eel rice, saying I might not be getting good board at the dormitory. They charged \forall 4.50 a month for board, which was 15 sen a day, and yet I learned "cutlet" and "omelette" for the first time in the dormitory dining room. We had some beefsteak, too. The beef occasionally had a purple-colored stamp on it.

"You must know this is horse-meat, Maruo," Takahashi

told me.

The real value of a mission school cannot be gained unless you live in its dormitory. I always recall my life for the next few years with a grateful heart. Ours was a dormitory without an inspector. There was a room-master in each room and a monitor on each floor. A monitor was an inspector elected by popular vote, for which college students of each floor were qualified. Because we were allowed complete self-government we felt responsible for everything we did. We knew it was foolish to cause any trouble because the responsibility fell directly on us.

The director, the heads of departments and the foreigners lived within the school compound. One evening the director stepped into our study. He was in his informal kimono.

"How do you do?" the director greeted Ito.

"Doing just as usual, sir," said Ito, scratching his head.
"You are reading something amusing, aren't you?"

"Well, I, I. . . ."

"Is that you, Maruo?" He remembered my name.

"Yes, sir."

"How do you like the school here?"

"I'm getting along all right, sir."

"Going out for any sports?"

"Haven't started any yet, sir."

"Takahashi!"

"Yes, sir."

"Maruo is new here. Take care of him. He is in your class, isn't he?"

"He is, sir."

"Oh, yes! I met your father the other day."

The director went on his way without saying any more but leaving different thoughts in our minds. I was happy to have my name remembered by one of the leading Christian scholars of Japan. The direct question about my liking the school was, to me, very significant. It led me to redouble my efforts. Ito had been caught reading a novel during study hour but was not censured. It was almost as though the director thought reading novels would do him some good.

"Gosh! Just my luck, but I don't read novels all the time," murmured Ito. He sounded slightly chastened but by

no means abject.

Takahashi must have been pleased at being asked to look out for a new boy. That the director asked him if I were in his class showed he knew Takahashi was a scholarship student. His father was a priest and was probably on friendly terms with the director. Anyone would be happy to hear his father's name mentioned to him.

Now let me depict this same scene as it might have happened in the dormitory of the prefectural middle school in my native town. The principal, despite the fact that all the affairs of the dormitory were the responsibility of the inspector, might have planned to come round some evening on a special inspection tour. On such an occasion, he would not come in a frock coat, but neither would he come in an informal kimono. He would show up with all the dignity of a principal, attended by one of his subordinates, the inspector.

There is a loud knock on the door.

"Come in!" says Ito, the room-master, thinking it is a friendly visitor. He is startled to have the principal and the inspector walk in. He hastily hides the novel he has

been reading behind his back but it is too late. The principal, with a stiff nod to our bow, comes over to our study table. Ito gives up and puts the novel on the table. I take it easy for I am reading a textbook, but I don't miss what is happening. The principal walks up behind Ito. Without a word he picks up the novel and leafs through it, taking a lot of time, for he thinks the longer he takes the more impressive it will be. Ito looks panic-stricken. The principal turns to me, and nods because he cannot find any fault with me. Then he steps up to Takahashi, who is not studying but is writing a letter. The principal stares at the letter, puts his glasses on and again looks fixedly at Takahashi's writing as though it were something under a microscope. After all, he knew a boy who wrote a love letter to a girl student. He thinks he must be very cautious but seems to feel relieved at finding the letter only an acknowledgment of a monthly allowance.

Both the principal and the inspector walk out of the room without uttering a word. After they are gone we three exchange glances. Ito, looking pale, sighs heavily.

"Things have come to a pretty pass," he says.

"You were caught reading a novel, weren't you?" asks Takahashi.

"Yes, it was Konjiki Yasha (Golden Demon, Koyo Ozaki's famous novel). I have just borrowed it from Sugimura."

"Let me have a look at it."
"The principal took it."

"Oh, yes, all novels are subject to confiscation, aren't they?"

"The trouble is, the book isn't mine."

"Besides confiscation, you got five days confinement, didn't you?"

"No, only a reprimand."

"Asakura's punishment was five days confinement."

"He was caught reading novels for the second time, and there was some other offenses, too."

Standing in the corridor outside our room the principal thrusts the novel under the inspector's nose and at last breaks his long silence.

"This is no good! The room-master was reading a novel

during study hours!"

"In spite of my strict injunction."

"Can you tell me what is in this book?"

"I can't, sir."

"Read it please and give me a report on it!"

"Yes, sir."

"What a nuisance!"

Various buds are about to put forth in an adolescent heart; when a boy starts reading novels his bud of literature is opening. To suffocate it highhandedly is against the divine will.

Shirokane Gakuin brought forth many literary men, master painters and musicians. These are the fruits of a democratic education. In those days I was indifferent to the principles used in educating us but nowadays, after the lapse of time, I can appreciate their efforts to stimulate our minds.

One evening I heard a foreigner's voice shouting in the playground, "Come out, boys!"
"What is he calling us for?"

"Mr. Warren is waiting for us with a telescope. He says anyone who wants to look at the stars should come out," Takahashi told us.

I went out with several others and was shown the moon and Mars. Mr. Warren could speak some Japanese. He was proud of speaking half Japanese and half English. He used to pronounce Kami (God) as Kame (turtle). So he preached in the chapel, Jesus is Kamenoko (son of turtle), and we had a hard time to keep from laughing.

Thanks to Mr. Warren we could occasionally peer through his telescope and learn the names of some of the stars. He must have meant for some of us to blossom out in

the field of astronomy, but his efforts went unrewarded, because no astronomer has ever been brought forth from Shirokane Gakuin.

Every Saturday evening we had a meeting of our Webster Association. Needless to say this was named after the famous American orator, Daniel Webster. Boys who were interested in elocution would get together in the classroom and practice public speaking. The society was organized by some college students, but middle-school boys were also allowed to participate. Literature, art and religion were the topics of discussion. This was also a bud-growing device. In this association I learned a great deal that I never would have in my provincial middle school. The names of Kant, Carlyle and Emerson became familiar to me at these meetings and inspired me to read their works later on. Ito dared to declare his atheism at one of these meetings, true to his nickname, the bravest samurai in Sasshu Kagoshima. Then Takahashi took the stand and vigorously refuted Ito's atheism. Excited by my room-mates' heated discussion, I delivered my maiden speech.

In short my belief was that whether God is or is not is far beyond the human intellect. One of the monitors stood up and praised my views. I learned from him that a man who held such opinion was called an agnostic. Herbert Spencer was an agnostic, I was taught. Ever since I have

fancied myself an agnostic.

By the time I reached the fourth grade I had become used to Shirokane Gakuin. The morning service was no longer a surprise to me. I could sing a hymn with the best of them, and I would listen to the director's Bible lectures with interest. The whole class was a bunch of fine fellows. We tackled all our problems as a group. One time we beat all the rest of the school in an intra-mural baseball game.

One happy event followed another, until all at once disaster struck. It was just before I was to be promoted to the fifth grade. The Ministry of Education approved the Middle School Act, a law stating that a middle school which held services and taught the Bible was not to be recognized as an accredited middle school. Such a school could not call itself a middle school. If services and the Bible were excluded, a mission school would lose its raison d'être. Shirokane Gakuin had no choice but to change the name of its middle school department to Middle Grade Department. They might continue the same curriculum, but it would no longer be a legitimate middle school. Hence the graduates would not be qualified to enter a high school (the high school here was in the terms of the old system a college grade). It was announced that those boys who wanted to go on to high school should apply to the school administration office at once for a transfer to another middle school.

This Middle School Act was repealed in two or three years, but at that time we were its victims. We were like samurai retainers whose lord had been sentenced to death by harakiri and who had to disperse with their families. We couldn't help thinking of the story of 47 Loyal Ronins. Out of thirty classmates fifteen boys were to leave for other authentic (?) middle schools. We were all close friends, drawn even closer together by this calamity. What a pitiful sight our farewell party was, with all the boys crying bitterly. Because I liked the Gakuin life I was among those who stayed where they were. My chum, Takahashi, a would-be priest, naturally remained with me.

Whenever I think of the Middle School Act, I realize the responsibility of what was called the Great Eastern Asia War or Eastern Asia Co-prosperity Sphere did not lie with the militarists alone. The Japanese government had already been trying to root out the Christian element from the country fifty years ago. The fantastic idea of "The Eight Corners of the World Under One Roof," the Japanese government's wartime slogan during World War II, meaning All-the-world one-family, was already budding in those early days of the twentieth century. Ever since that time

bureaucratic education has been based on the inculcation of this principle. A soldier is not a thinker. The Ministry of Education had completed the system of thought in the years of its educational administration.

## Chapter 5

### CONVERSION OF THE AGNOSTIC

The next year was 1901, the second year of the twentieth century. In the spring of that year I graduated from the middle grade department of Shirokane Gakuin. I was ineligible to enter high school, but still I could apply to government technical or professional colleges other than high schools, which were the preparatory course to the Imperial universities. Both my father and my eldest brother, encouraged by my school record, thought that I should apply for entrance to Higher Commercial School, now Hitotsubashi University. However, partly due to my easygoing nature and partly to my abhorrence of bureaucratic education, I did not do anything about it and was automatically enrolled in the college department of Shirokane Gakuin. In those days the college department was fairly insignificant. The students enrolled totaled only twenty at best. Only five or six graduated every year, most of whom sought employment with some foreign firms in Yokohama or became English teachers in provincial middle schools.

About this time there was a movement called the All-Out Evangelization Campaign. It started at the very beginning of the year in commemoration of the new century. The plan was to Christianize all Japan. At Shirokane evangelical meetings were held night after night. Takahashi was feverishly involved in this campaign. We no longer lived in the same room, but he was a warm friend of mine all the same.

"Maruo, believe and be saved!"

He was very persistent in trying to convert me, but I remained as agnostic as ever. I seemed to be a happy-golucky nature. Since I had been stamped as an agnostic by a senior student, I made up my mind to hang on to my

reputation as such.

The campaign succeeded in gaining a number of converts and, strange to say, Ito, the bravest samurai of Sasshu Kagoshima, was one of them. He had graduated two years earlier and had tried and failed the entrance examination for a high school. After spending a year at home, he came back and was enrolled in the college department.

"You shouldn't stay here as a stopgap to go to a

governmental school," the director told him.

"I hate government schools now," Ito replied. "I mean

to go to America and continue my studies there."

In those days there was a going-to-America boom. There was a book called *Guide to Go to America*, by Heidaiu Shimanuki. You had to muster only \mathbb{T}200, \mathbb{T}100 for your trip and \mathbb{T}100 to show your social status as a rich man. Once you planted your feet there, you could graduate from a college by washing dishes.

Now even Ito began to try to convert me, but his way

of doing it was different.

"Come on! Let's wrestle. If you lose, you join the Christians."

Just then Uchida—born fighter—intervened, and the wrestling match was between him and Ito. My conversion

was postponed by Ito's defeat.

Among sixteen graduates only six remained in the college department. We missed them badly. And two years later my best friend, Takahashi, died. Those who are loved by God are called to Him earlier, it is said. Takahashi had

always been a slender boy and had now developed chest trouble. After graduating from the college department he intended to go on to the Faculty of Theology. But when he was about to start his sophomore year, his health began to fail. When I came back from my summer vacation, I was shocked to find him emaciated.

Soon afterwards he was hospitalized, and his condition grew steadily worse. On one December day it became critical, and his father hurried up from Kansai. Every evening Ito and I went to see our dear friend in the hospital. When suffering from fatal diseases people usually become very pious and pray to God for mercy. Takahashi, with the approach of his last hours, was just the reverse. His faith in God was completely shattered. When I mentioned heaven to him he turned aside, with a wry face.

One time I said firmly, "I mean it, Takahashi! Even though we have to part now, we are destined to meet again."

"I appreciate your good will, but I'm no longer a gullible kid. Don't talk such nonsense just to ease my mind."

"I wasn't, er . . . er . . . "

"You are an agnostic, aren't you?"

What could I say? I didn't believe what I was telling him, but felt that I must try to comfort him in some way.

"No God! No next world! They are man's desperate inventions!" Takahashi cried out sharply and shut his eyes. Tears from his closed eyelids coursed down his wasted cheeks. I cried, too, bitterly unreconciled to the approaching death of our beloved friend.

"Yes, God does exist!" Ito said stoutly, and added,

"Believe me, I am a Christian. I'm no liar like Maruo."

Ito was such a tactless fellow. It was just like saying that I was an habitual liar. Even so, his thoughtless comment helped to lighten the tension.

"Don't get excited, Takuji. Get a little sleep now," his father said as he placed his hand on his son's brow. Being a priest, he occasionally closed his eyes and prayed. We didn't dare talk about religion any longer. Instead we spoke as if there were hope of his recovery. Takahashi saw through us and with a sad smile said, "I know the truth."

"Of what?"

"Of life and death. The best way is to think that I wasn't even born, that's all."

"No, Takahashi!"

"What a fool I was!"

"Why?"

"To spend all my life just to arrive at this simple truth." There was nothing we could say. Nothing at all. It takes a lot of tact and intelligence to deal with a dying person.

"A brilliant patient is hard to handle. Before we can fool him, he knows what we were going to say," Ito blurted

out in his embarrassment.

Studying for final exams kept us in the dormitory for two nights. Then a telephone call came from Takahashi's father, saying that the crisis might be that night and asking us to come immediately. We grabbed a bite to eat and rushed to the hospital. Takahashi was asleep. His father told us that the doctor had just left, saying he could do nothing more.

"A few minutes ago Takuji could say one or two words,"

his father told us sadly.

We three sat silently by Takahashi's bed. Ito nudged my knee, but I had already noticed the reddish tinge creeping over his emaciated, wax-white face. With his dying breath, he swallowed hard. His chest rose and fell rhythmically. We gazed at each other in astonishment. Instantly Takahashi's eyes opened wide. They looked not like a dying man's eyes but like the bright clear ones of a normal healthy person.

"Dad!" No sooner had he uttered this than he noticed

our presence.
"Maruo! Ito!"

"How do you feel?" I asked.

"Dad! I now know. Maruo and Ito, too!"

"What do you know?" his father asked.

"We'll meet again, meet again," Takahashi gently replied in a low voice. He nodded and closed his eyes. We thought he had gone to sleep, but he had already breathed his last.

I cried softly but Ito wailed aloud.

Takahashi's last moments gave me food for thought. I thought about my friend's life and death constantly and began to ponder the hitherto imponderable. I have never confessed my faith in Christianity, but I believe in God and the next world. In the Bible the transfiguration of Jesus Christ is taught and the brightness in Takahashi's face just before his death made me think of its possibility.

"We will meet again, meet again."

He did not say that in a delirium. There must have been something objective and positive about the other world to him.

Ito often spoke about the impression that moment made on him.

"You might say I was seduced into Christianity at the time of the mass evangelization campaign, but Takahashi's death made me a real Christian."

Nobody else but Takahashi could have converted that boisterous fellow, Ito, and made him carry on his faith to this day. That would-be priest, that brilliant boy, Takuji Takahashi, converted two of his bosom friends through his death.

# Chapter 6

#### CODFISH BROTH

Home sweet home. The old cliché is true; there is no place like it. I am now enjoying some of the annual events in my home town, Tsuruoka, after half a century's absence. Each season's food has its own special associations. At every turn, too, I am reminded of my relatives. They are all gone now, leaving me behind as the eldest of the whole family.

Several of my friends are still going strong. Homma is one of them. His business is making soybean sauce. One day he came over with a gift of his best shoyu (soy sauce). We

were soon talking over old times.

"By the way, Zen-chan," he said calling me by my boyhood name, "you used to be fond of hunting and fishing, didn't you? How about going bird netting with me tomorrow morning?"

"Can you catch a lot of birds?"

"Not as many as I once could, but I can still catch twenty or thirty."

"Down near the river?"

"That's right. I'll come and get you tomorrow morning."

"Please do."

Every time we went bird netting we caught quite a few and again enjoyed the mouth-watering treat of suzume-yaki (broiled small birds).

At a memorial service for an old friend at Kokakuji (Buddhist temple), I happened to run into Homma. We were talking when the priest of the temple came over and spoke to me.

"Do you remember me, Maruo-san?" he asked. "Well now, let me see."

"You once came with Homma-san late one night to catch carp in the temple pond."

"Oh yes, now I remember. So you are Ryonen-san. How

nice to see you again after all these years!"

I recognized him only after he reminded me of our boyhood escapade. He had been Homma's classmate and later had studied for the priesthood. His head priest was a big old man with an enormous clean-shaven head which was always shining. We called him Shine-san. After Shine-san had turned in, having had his usual cups of sake, Ryonen-san secretly led us down to the pond and let us fish for carp.

"The great priest has gone to Nirvana," he whispered,

"daijobu, daijobu (don't be afraid)."

That Ryonen is now the great priest of the town. And

here we three were together again.

"Will you join us in bird netting?" Homma said jokingly. "Oh, no! Buddha forbid!" the priest answered, smiling.

Fishing for carp in the temple pond had simply been sport for us, a sort of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn adventure, you may say. We were not short of fish supplies, because my native town is quite near the sea. In the fall many salmon are caught; smaller sea-breams are plentiful all the year round, and with winter the codfish arrive in great numbers. Codfish broth is a special food of this district.

"You haven't tasted codfish broth for a long time, have

you, Uncle?" Kiyoshi asked me a few days later.

"No, for I never have been home in winter."

"You may enjoy it as much as you like this winter. I remember how I longed for some of it while I was in Tokyo."

"So did I. Speaking of codfish broth. . . . ah, thereby hangs a tale," I said, lapsing into a professional tone of voice.

"A fish tail, no doubt!" Kiyoshi couldn't resist the obvious

pun.
"Yes," I answered, "and a sad one it was, fifty years ago."

In China there is a famous anecdote known as the "Fascinating Bass Salad." Chang-kan was a high official at Luyang in the government during the Tang Dynasty. Refreshing autumn breezes made him think about bass and water cress in his birthplace, Wuchang. The thought of the delicious bass and water cress was irresistible. Changkan forget himself, resigned his position and returned home only to enjoy bass salad.

Now I must confess that I followed in the wake of this Bohemian Chinese official. Follies of life trap us now and then. Seeing the first snow of the year in Tokyo, I thought

about the delectable codfish broth back at home.

Tsuruoka, though near the sea, lies far in the northeastern district. In the early days the railway could not reach it on account of numerous mountains. The name of the prefecture is Yamagata (mountainous)-ken. We had to walk twenty miles to reach the nearest station. Rickshaws

were the only means of conveyance.

In winter it snowed very hard there and snow storms sometimes stopped traffic. When spring came the mountain highway was exposed to the danger of snowslides. So I went home only for summer vacations. During the snow season, if traffic inconvenience was taken into account, it did not pay to go home. Nevertheless, those who have been brought up in snow country yearn for snow. After spending several snowless winters in Tokyo, one late December day (the day of Takahashi's funeral) we had our first snowfall. The feathery flakes covered the school ground only a few inches deep.

"Back at home there must be a heavy snow."

I saw in my mind's eye a snow-covered street corner of the old castle town, a horse sleigh gliding merrily along with its bells ringing, and an old woman fishmonger selling codfish in the falling snow.

"Now codfish and snow-laver (edible algae) are in

season. They must be having codfish broth."

Snow-laver and codfish were to me as bass and water

cress were to the Chinese epicure. The mere thought of codfish broth made my mouth water. The dormitory bill of fare (onion cutlets and horse meat steaks) was responsible to some extent for my decision.

"I'll just have to go home. It will soon be winter

vacation anyway."

Overcome by nostalgia, I made up my mind to start at once. After I got on the train I found that I was suffering from a slight cold. I put my hand on my forehead. I was feverish. Though all right while on the train, when I got off at the terminal station I began to regret my impulsiveness. But I had come too far to go back. Then followed two full days in a horse-drawn sleigh through heavy snow storms! As soon as I arrived at home I went to bed with a high fever. The doctor diagnosed my trouble as pleurisy.

"Codfish broth! Codfish broth!" they told me I cried out

in my delirium.

For a time I was so ill that I felt as if I were going to follow poor Takahashi. This was the first serious illness in my life, and I saw only the gloomy side of it. By the end of January I was out of danger and well on the way to recovery. It was only then that I tasted the long-hoped-for codfish broth.

In my worry over going back to school I got up too soon and had a relapse. It wasn't until April that I was completely well again. If I had returned to school at once I could have taken a supplementary examination, but the doctor thought it too risky. So I made up my mind to stay away from school until the following summer.

What a big mess I was in: "The greed for codfish broth

caused me one year's delay at school."

"The greed for bass salad cost the Chinese mandarin his position and his future prospects," Kiyoshi responded.
"By the way, Kiyoshi, do you know anything about

haiku poetry?"

"Only a little. Can't pretend to know much, as literature isn't my field."

"Buson, a great haiku poet, referred to the fascinating bass salad in his haiku in praise of globe fish broth. He said even the Chinese official enamoured of autumn breezes didn't know of it. Neither do I know globe fish broth. But I was fascinated by codfish broth and sacrificed one entire school year. So I shall try to compose a haiku on codfish broth."

"Uncle, look here. 'My grass blade arrow hit you right in the heart. Pardon me, sister. I am only joking.'"

"What's that?"

"It's your haiku, Uncle Zen. I once saw it written on a tanjaku (a long strip of paper) and hanging on the wall. So I have definite proof in my hands."

"Your definite proof again?"

"Be that as it may. You were staying at home that whole year, weren't you?"

"Not quite, but nearly a year-from the end of the year

till the end of summer vacation."

"I expect it was during that time that you started your love affair with Aunt Mitsuko."

Kiyoshi touched a sore spot. He surely is an odd one. Whenever the talk is about my love affairs, he forgets to be respectful.

"Don't get mixed up, Kiyoshi. Your Aunt Mitsuko was

only seventeen then and I twenty-one."

"There, I have got another proof!"

"What did you say?"

"Didn't you tell me you weren't sure whether you were four years older or five years older?"

"Yes, It might have been four and it might have been

five."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"Haruyo-san was the same age as I. I'm sure of that."

I barely got out of it. I was partly to blame, for on this occasion I talked with him on equal terms and let him catch me off my guard.

## Chapter 7

#### HAPPY-GO-LUCKY

When young Boswell invited Dr. Johnson to dine and then found that he could not reserve a room in the restaurant, he was quite upset. It happened soon after he had been favored with the unexpected friendship of the doctor. He bowed again and again and repeated his apologies, but the Great Moralist interrupted him, saying, "Don't worry about such a trifle which we shall forget in a week or two."

Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson is one of my favorite books. Lord Macaulay is said to have gone through it thirty times. I have received a good deal of benefit from this

great man.

Life is full of trifles that are forgotten in a week or two. But we are apt to regard them as if they were matters of life and death. When I was delayed one year by the illness caused through my carelessness, I was as greatly distressed as though my whole life's plan had been overthrown. However, looking back upon my past I now find that it had little or nothing to do with my present life. On the contrary, I think I even profited by it. The blunder I made in middle school is no exception. At the time I did not know what to do with myself. But now I realize that it had been good for me. Contretemps in life, in a broad way of thinking, may be nothing but Heaven's dispensation. Our always timely friend, Shakespeare, tells us, "Sweet are the uses of adversity."

In the summer after being elevated to a senior from a lowly sophomore, I went home for the holidays. It was the

year the Russo-Japanese war broke out. I feel sad when I think it was the first step toward bringing about today's calamity to Japan. It was a busy year for my family. My eldest brother, Kosuke, got married. My other brother,

Tsunejiro, married into a well-to-do family.

Kosuke had already reached a marriageable age, and I knew a match was in progress through Mother's letters, but Tsunejiro's wedding was a surprise to me. After graduating from middle school, he did not wish to gain a higher education. He said it was foolish to enter college only to become a white collar worker. He thought it better to go to Hokkaido, start a livestock farm and make a fortune. His plan was too big to be accepted by our parents, however. As he couldn't remain idle, he began teaching in a primary school in a hilly village. While he was working industriously there, the daughter of a big landowner fell in love with him and decided on him for her husband.

"I hear you will be married soon, Tsunejiro. Congratula-

tions!" I was really glad of my brother's good luck.

"I'd never have dreamed of it."

"You're not exactly the sort to marry an heiress. Do you

think you will make out all right?"

"I've thought a lot about it, Zen. Even though I should go to Hokkaido to try my fortune right now, it would not be easy. There's no telling whether I should succeed or fail. It will be much simpler to take care of a fortune other people have made."

"Mom told me you are eagerly sought after by your

fiancée's family."

"Yes, they've kept at Mom about it for six months now, threatening that the girl might commit suicide if refused."

"What sort is she? An ordinary looking girl?"

"No. She's the belle of the village. She was quite popular even in her school days, Haru-chan says. She was a classmate of hers."

"Oh. Then she's a graduate of Girls' High? Good!"

I talked like an older brother, but as he was only two

years older I could be quite frank with him.

"The headmaster acts as the go-between. I kept wondering why the family invited the headmaster and me together so often. Suddenly the headmaster broke the news to me about the match, telling me the daughter was desperately in love with me. He reminded me that as the second son I was not an heir in my own family and was free to marry the heiress."

"It's a real romance, isn't it? But then, I'm not surprised."

"What puzzles me is just what there is about me that attracted her in the first place. But my motto is, 'Why should I worry?'"

Tsunejiro's light hearted confidences put me in a very good humor. But the next moment he surprised me with

another piece of news.

"By the way, Zen. Haru-chan, our cousin, is getting married soon."

"To whom?"

"Do you know Kosuke's classmate, Kenichi Yoshida? You may not, for he's a lot older than you."

"No, I don't know him."

"Lives in Shin-machi. He is a graduate of the Higher Commercial School and is working for a firm in Tokyo."

"So Haru-chan will live in Tokyo, won't she?"

"Yes, Kosuke told me she's getting a brilliant fellow for her husband."

"Well, this means more congratulations. One happy event after another isn't it?" I said cheerfully, but somehow I felt a kind of void. They are leaving me alone, I thought.

Uncle Daisuke, my father's brother, was running a habutae (silk) mill with little success. Haruyo, his older daughter, was just my age. Yoichi, her younger brother, and Mitsuko, her younger sister, completed the family circle.

The year I stayed at home Uncle Daisuke asked me to teach Yoichi English. He was a fifth grader in middle school

and wanted to go on to high school. At the same time I taught English to Mitsuko, who was a third-grader in the girls' high school (counterpart of boys' middle school). Naturally I grew very fond of Haruyo. We joked a lot and teased each other, but there was no love yet between us. Nevertheless, we both enjoyed the freedom of associating with each other. For my part I had thought about asking for her hand, when I returned home. Now she was already engaged. Our close friendship, however, paved the way for another development.

Both Kosuke and Tsunejiro had their wedding ceremonies in the fall. On each occasion I rushed home. But I forgot all about Haruyo's wedding, until I received a printed announcement from her. I remembered only that the ceremony was to have been on the Emperor's birthday. She stated on the card that they had settled down at 1-chome, Aoyama-Kita-Machi, and asked me to drop in some time. I made a special call one Sunday and met her husband, Yoshida, for the first time. They invited me to stay for lunch, and I had a pleasant visit. In January, during the

winter holidays, I went to see them again.

In March that year I graduated from the college department, but having been told employment was hard to obtain, I gave up trying. Of five graduates, one became an English teacher in a country middle school and had already left for his new job, and three others had gone to America. I was always happy-go-lucky. When I finished the middle grade department I slipped easily into the college department, avoiding the trouble most middle school graduates had of getting into a government college. Now that I had finished the college course I did not know what to do next. Being unable to settle on any plan, I went to the director for advice.

"What an easy-going fellow you are, Maruo," he said,

looking at me sharply.

"If I can't get a position, will you allow me to stay here and continue to study?"

"Wouldn't you like to be enrolled in the Theological Department?"

"I'd like to study English literature, sir."

"I can't establish a seminar for only one student. If there were at least three of you, it might be worth considering."

"I can't stay in the dormitory after I have graduated,

can I?"

"For the time being, yes. But when the freshmen come,

you will have to make room for them."

The talk was cut short by a visitor. It was then confirmed that I could no longer stay in the dormitory. In my dismay I went to see Yukichi for advice about my board and room.

"If you don't mind this shabby house, I will willingly take care of you. But why waste money for further study when you can be a middle school teacher right now?" It was natural for Yukichi to have a practical point of view.

Several days later the director sent for me. I sprinted

over to his office like a freshman track star.

"There is a vacancy in the library staff. Do you want it?" he asked immediately.

"By all means. I'd like to try it."

"The salary is \forall 17 a month. Can you get by on \forall 17?"

"I'll get some from my parents, sir."

"You shouldn't sponge on your parents any longer."

"I think I can manage to get along somehow."

"You might stay in the dormitory as long as it isn't filled up."

The following day I was sent for again.

"Our new professor, Mr. Nichol, is looking for a teacher in the Japanese language. I've recommended you to him. It will be for three times a week. In the morning."

"Am I qualified for the job, do you think?"

"It's Japanese that you've got to teach. Of course you're qualified. But you do use the Tohoku (Northeastern) dialect."

"Yes, sir."

"That doesn't matter. Go ahead. You can get \foatleast."

"Thank you, sir. I'll do my very best."

"How much did Misawa get at the country middle school?"

"\\$35, I hear."

"Then, I'll have Mr. Nichol pay you \\$15. The library job will pay \\$17. Altogether that will make \\$32. Still \\$3 short, however. Surely you won't mind counting \\$3 for staying in Tokyo."

"I'm much obliged to you, sir."

"Read all the English literature in the library. Through teaching Japanese to Mr. Nichol you can improve your spoken English. Won't that be a more pleasant prospect than settling down in the country as a middle school teacher at \\$35 a month?"

That I could continue to stay in the dormitory was a great relief to me. I began the library job and also teaching Japanese to Mr. Nichol. Though I felt a bit humiliated by my Tohoku accent, to the newly arrived American it would have made no difference whether I spoke the Tohoku dialect or the Kyushu dialect. It so happened that Mr. Nichol spent the rest of his life evangelizing in the Tohoku district.

"How lucky I was to have had you, Maruo-san, as my first Japanese teacher," he jokingly said to me many years later.

# Chapter 8

### CHERRY BLOSSOM SEASON

Another note came from Haruyo, whom I had been neglecting. She invited me to come over, saying she had "certain visitors" from home. To arouse my curiosity she underlined the words certain visitors. Wondering who they might be, I went to her house at once and found Yoichi and Mitsuko. Mitsuko had already finished school and turned out to be a beauty with bright eyes and perfect teeth.

"She has taken on new charms, hasn't she?" Haruyo

introduced her to me proudly.

"Yes, she has grown to be a big girl."

"Don't say 'girl.' She has reached womanhood now. She is nineteen."

"I half guessed who the certain visitors were, for you underlined the words."

"I did that purposely. Otherwise you mightn't have come."

"She must have graduated at the head of her class and been rewarded with doing the sights of Tokyo."

"You guessed right! She was the valedictorian."

"Fine! I congratulate you, Mitsuko-san."

"Thank you," Mitsuko answered, modestly looking down.

"I invited her to let her see what life in Tokyo is like. She can gain a bit of polish here and surprise Father and Mother when she gets home."

"Shall I take her around Tokyo?"

When I was talking only about Mitsuko, her brother, Yoichi, broke into our conversation.

"Zen-san. I am here too."

"Oh, I'm sorry. How are you getting along, Yo-chan?" "I was working at home by myself but feeling the need of more preparation. I came to Tokyo to study at a prepschool."

"Good!"

"I think I'll apply to the First High School and also to Higher Commercial School."

Haruyo offered me some of their souvenir gifts from

home. They were plum jelly and fox-face millet cakes.

"Thinking Tokyo short of sweets, they brought these treats to us. Don't they remind you of home?"

"Yes, just tasting them makes me homesick."

"Well, Zen-san, you've graduated too. Congratulations!" "Thank you!"

"Where are you working?"

"I'm helping at my Alma Mater."

"Are you teaching?"

"No. I am working in the library."

"A clerk?"

"A librarian."

"Good heavens!"

"I teach Japanese to a foreigner on the side."

"After all your hard studies, why don't you get a better position? You could work for some business firm, couldn't

you? Being good at English would be an asset."

To Haruyo money is everything. According to her, even social positions come from money. She is kindhearted but an absolute snob. She measures a man's worth by the size of the salary he gets. I dared not tell her I made only \\$32 a month. By way of enlightening her I said with a slightly superior air, "Some of our graduates are working for foreign firms in Yokohama. They get big bonuses, too, I hear. But I don't like to work just for money."

"But even at school you work for a salary, don't you?"

"I do, yes."

"Then you are working for money, after all."

"Yes, but it's not the same. When a professor is lecturing he never thinks of money; when a painter is painting, he gives himself up to painting a good picture. When a vocalist is singing, it's the same; he never thinks of how much he is making."

"Everybody is like that when he is devoted to his work. Even me. When cooking I'm dead set on making a good

dish."

"But how about clerks in a firm or a trading company? All the time they try to buy for as little as possible and sell as high as possible. The more time they spend in this way the more they think of money. They are enslaved by money. Their job is very simple. All they have to do is to buy low and sell high. The simple arithmetic of addition and subtraction is all they need to know."

"Of course it isn't! Even well-educated people make a

bad choice sometimes."

"They say all callings are equally honorable. But I believe some are honorable and others are not. The mental life of scholars and artists who are not the slaves of money is exalted but that of merchants and clerks who worship Mammon is mean."

"You talk too outspokenly, don't you, Zen-san?"

"I'm only theorizing, you know."

"Didn't you know my Ken-san was working for a trading company?"

"No, I'm sorry."

"A teacher of Japanese is all right. A librarian is all right I am not asking you to work for a firm. Zen-san, look at me." So saying, Haruyo stared at me and made a face.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"Arguing again, aren't you?" Mitsuko laughed.

"Talking with Haru-chan always leads to a debate."

"You started it, Zen-san. I simply asked you if you wished to work for a company."

"Don't tell Ken-san, please."

"I will!"

Soon Haruyo's husband came home. He was quite direct. As soon as he saw me he asked expectantly, "You've gone to work for the school, haven't you?"

"Not yet, but I'm just about to."

"I envy a teacher's life. Men become money mad when they work for money all the time."

"We were having a hot dispute about who is better, a

teacher or an office worker."

"Stop it, Zen-san," Haruyo interrupted. She sounded

really angry.

It was the middle of spring. I still remember Mitsuko standing amid the falling petals of cherry blossoms. The following Sunday we five went flower viewing at Yoshida's suggestion. Yoshida turned out to be a good friend of mine and Haruyo always welcomed me warmly. After that I often visited their Aoyama home.

Life is full of follies, and now my real folly was about

to take shape.

### Chapter 9

### BEFORE CONSCRIPTION

In the spring I graduated from college, and when the cherry blossoms were at their best I fell in love with Mitsuko. Falling in love is only a one-sided matter. We may fall in love with as many girls as we please. But English grammar commands us to supply an adverbial phrase, "with each other," to make it mutual love. That is the trouble.

When Haruyo mailed me a note drawing my attention to underlined words, she must have meant to give me a surprise by showing how her sister, Mitsuko, had turned into a beauty. Whether I fell in love or not was my own problem, but Haruyo might have had a plan in mind. I remember her attitude at the time was quite encouraging. I took to visiting the Yoshida home at Aoyama, where Mitsuko was staying. The Japanese proverb has it that if you want to shoot a general you must shoot his horse first. I made it a point to curry favor with Haruyo and Yoshida. We talked about Tsuruoka, our home town, and there was no end of topics, Yoichi and Mitsuko joining in, of course.

One evening I appeared in a smart new suit made by

Yukichi.

"How splendid you look in your new suit!" Haruyo said admiringly. "It's high time you did away with your old uniform."

Yoshida asked me how much I paid for it. On my telling the price, he said it was cheap; he would have one made by the same tailor. When I took out a pack of cigarettes, Mitsuko said in surprise, "Do you smoke, Zen-san?"

"Ken-san got me to smoking. Do you hate the smell of

smoke?"

"Not exactly!"

"If you do mind, I'll give it up."

"No. It's up to you whether you smoke or not."

I made much of her opinion in everything. I fell in love with her. Though I was quite free to do so on my part, she kept the all important adverbial phrase to herself. I was on probation, as it were. If she took an interest in my affairs, there was hope, I thought.

"Zen-san, you are too serious-minded. You can't get on in the world that way. I started you not only smoking but

to drinking as well," Yoshida joked.

Yoshida had a tendency to pretend to be bad. In spite of taking pride in his work as an office worker and doing his job well, he pretended to be otherwise.

"You are unmasking your true self day by day. You said you didn't like to drink, but you come home tipsy some-

times," protested Haruyo. They were newly married and loved each other passionately. But they often made a show of a man-and-wife quarrel just to remind me of my bachelorhood.

"If I'd said I liked drinking, you'd have refused to marry

me."

"What a liar!" "You lied, too!" "What about?"

"You are not as beautiful as the picture exchanged before

our marriage."

"No wonder. Every woman looks different with full makeup on. You looked more handsome in your picture than you really do, you know."

"Are you disappointed?" "Not exactly, but . . ."

"Enough! I'm fed up with all your nonsense," I interposed to show my existence. At that time we had no cinema. There was yose (a kind of vaudeville), but it had no charm for us backwoodsmen. With no radio and no mahjong, our only pastime was occasional card playing. We had no other way to while away the time except to talk over tea.

"Shall I tell you the secret of sure failure at the physical examination for conscription?" Yoshida said one evening.

My physical examination was about to come up. Conscrip-

tion was a great problem for every young man.
"By all means! I'm haunted by a vague apprehension lately. Heaven forbid conscription!"

"It would change your whole life. You've got to get out

of it."

"If I went through it in the country, I might be safe because there are many healthy country boys."

"You have quite a strong physique yourself." "I have no weak points except my eyes." "What is the strength of your glasses?"

"Somewhere about fourteen or fifteen."

"A one-year volunteer will pass with that rating."

"Yes, a fellow with about the same eyesight was conscripted last year."

"If you volunteer, you will be commissioned a second lieutenant, won't you?" Mitsuko asked. Her concern about

me was a distinct pleasure.

How to evade military service was the main worry of young men in those days—in fact, throughout the Meiji, Taisho and Showa eras. As far as conscription was concerned, people were double-dealing—back and front. The back was private and true, and the front was official and hypocritical. Officially they wished to be conscripted, privately they wished to be exempted from military service. In my native town there was a fox deity enshrined in the Inari Temple. It was the deity who helped to avoid conscription. When young men came of age their superstitious mothers prayed to the fox god for their sons' exemption. Some young man went so far as to cut his index finger off with a hatchet.

"Congratulations! You are a '1-A' conscript, I hear."

Neighbors would come to offer good wishes. His father would come out and say, "Thank you. I am glad he will be of service to the Emperor. Nothing could make me happier."

He faked his good humor, but once he got inside he grumbled and the whole family would lament their bad luck. During the war the difference between the back and the front was still more marked. Judging from their successful double-dealings over a long stretch of time, Japanese

people should have the makings of great actors.

Varied methods of avoiding conscription were contrived. Students were too clever to chop their fingers off like the poor country fellow. They followed a prescription of drinking half pint of soyabean sauce a day for a week. It would make the drinker's heart beat so violently that the examining military surgeon would mistake him for a cardiac patient. One's height is unchangeable but the weight is not fixed. Those who were thin endeavored to get still thinner. Someone pretended to be deaf and was successful for a while, but when he was going out he was called back; in

an unguarded moment he called out an answer and was caught.

"I will try my best with my near-sightedness."

I had no other means but to rely on my sole weak point. "That might be the only way, after all. You should wear more highly concave glasses."

"I started wearing them last January. At first I couldn't

see my feet, but now I've got used to it."

"My eyes were as bad as yours. I wore heavy lenses and besides, while sitting in the waiting room, I kept counting the numbers of my kimono stripes. The eyes will get weak when tired. They took me for about eight degrees."

"That's a brilliant idea. I'll do that. I'll go in kimono."

"Borrow your father's kimono," cried Mitsuko.

She again showed her interest in my affairs, to my great satisfaction. Older people's kimonos have more and smaller

stripes.

On account of my near-sightedness I turned out to be Grade "C" and unfit for military service. There were many among my friends who were rejected. The reason there are so many nearsighted people among Japanese intellectuals is not that their eyes are weak by nature. The conscription system was responsible for this fact. Students were never bothered with near-sightedness. On the contrary, they read books with fine print in the hope of becoming weak-sighted and avoiding the draft.

By the way, when I went home for the physical examination for conscription, I was entrusted with escorting Mitsuko because she was tired of Tokyo life after her two months' stay. Yoichi had been scheduled to go but I per-

suaded him to stay.

"You should stay in Tokyo and work hard. One day's work just before the exam is as good as a week's work at

another time," I told him.

Before she said farewell to Tokyo, Haruyo and her husband took Mitsuko to a theater and I accompanied her. It was the *Kabukiza*. For the first time in my life I enjoyed a

real Kabuki play (Japanese classical drama). What the play was about I do not recall. But I do remember that there was a pretty severe earthquake in the midst of a scene and everybody in the audience jumped to his feet.

"What shall I do, Zen-chan!" cried Mitsuko, clinging to

my arm.

There was another farewell party. I invited Mitsuko to the strawberry garden at Meguro. This time Yoichi was with us. In Meguro there is no longer any trace of the place, which was once noted for bamboo sprouts. There were a number of farmers' houses that had strawberry gardens. Students are quick at finding food. The strawberries of Meguro had been made famous by them. Carrying sugar and milk, we could eat our fill of the delicious red fruits. They were both fresh and cheap.

One Sunday morning early the whole party met at Shirokane Gakuin. I wanted to show the inside of my school to Mitsuko. We dropped into Yukichi's tailor shop, too, and

Yoshida ordered a suit.

When we were out of the city limits, Mitsuko exclaimed in delight, "I never expected to see such a place in Tokyo!"

A lark was warbling high up in the air. It was one of the bright days of May. In the distance we could see Mt. Fuji sharply defined against the blue sky.

"Mitsuko-san!" called Yoshida.

"What?"

"Listen! Mt. Fuji is murmuring!"

"Really?"

"Yes, it says it has a message for Mt. Chokai."

"O! dear! ho, ho, ho, ho."

"I want to go home, too." Haruyo longed for home. Speaking of Mt. Chokai in Yamagata-ken made her a bit homesick.

As I visited the farmer's house several times each season, I was quite familiar with the members of the family. They welcomed us cordially. We squatted beside the rows of strawberries and picked the luscious fruit. We ate a lunch of creamed bread, which I had prepared, with the strawberries fresh from the garden.

"I never ate better strawberries. I've got to pass the exam and come here every year," said Yoichi excitedly.

Since the place was quite familiar to me, I showed them around. I took them to the tomb of Kansho Sensei (Dr. Sweet Potato), so called because he first introduced the sweet potato from China, and also to Fudosan (god of fire). We walked as far as Shinagawa, stopping in the Myokaen Flower Garden at Osaki. Nowadays the place has turned into such a crowded section that one can hardly think of the time when it was a vast stretch of rice fields. We walked on a well-worn path across the field, where violets and dandelions were blooming. I picked a bunch of small flowers and gave it to Mitsuko.

"Mitsuko-san, do you know what this flower is called

in English?" I asked.

"No, I don't."
"Forget-me-not."
"Oh! Really?"

She gazed at the tiny blue flowers awhile and tucked

them in her obi (sash).

Yoichi recited a Chinese poem in a loud voice. Haruyo and Mitsuko, being excited, sang the song of their Alma Mater in chorus. I sang a hymn. Yoshida in a competitive mood began to sing a folk song of our native place.

My dear lass might be coming to see me, So I stole my way to the end of my field. Kobaetel Kobaetel

Haruyo nudged him, seeing some passers-by. "Don't! Remember, this is Tokyo." But Yoshida continued nonchalantly,

Only to find a tobacco-seller crying, Tobacco, tobacco, to my discomfiture, Kobaete! Kobaete!

# Chapter 10

#### LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

That summer I went home again for the holidays. Yoichi had been lucky enough to be admitted to Higher Commercial School. This proved very handy for me. In Tokyo Yoichi didn't matter, but in Tsuruoka he was very important in my life. Because I couldn't call on Mitsuko openly, I used the pretext of seeing Yoichi to visit the Dai Marus'.

"Is Yoichi-kun at home?"

If I had asked to see Uncle Daisuke they would have

taken me to the weaving factory.

Mitsuko came out to see me as if it were the natural thing to do, even though her brother was absent. Her mother seemed sympathetic toward us, since I had been so kind to

Mitsuko in Tokyo.

"Come in, Zen-chan! Oh! I shouldn't have called you Zen-chan, since you are a grown man now. Zenzaburo-san!" She pronounced each syllable with special emphasis. But most of the time she forgot and kept saying Zen-chan. Uncle Daisuke called me Zen-bo, for I was still just a child to him.

"You are a teacher now, aren't you, Zen-bo?"

"Yes, Uncle. Something like that."

"Go ahead and plan on any career that appeals to you. You can write the *One Thousand Characters* (classic Chinese textbook of character writing called *Senjimon*) in crabwalking letters by now, can't you?" he said.

It was fortunate that Mitsuko was of a literary turn of mind. The Japanese word for a girl with literary aspirations had not yet come into existence then, but Mitsuko might have been one of them. If she had lived in England or America at a slightly earlier period, she would have been called a bluestocking. Unlike Haruyo, she was not pretentious but had the gift of beautiful simplicity of mind.

"I don't quite understand the new style poetry but some-

how it attracts me strongly."

This gave me a good opening.

"Whose poems do you like best?" I asked.

"Well, let me see! Maybe Toson's."

"Toson is an alumnus of Shirokane Gakuin."

"So I understand. You told me that when I had the honor of seeing your school."

"Toson is about ten years older than I."

"I also had the honor of seeing the memorial tree planted by his class."

"The honor of seeing sounds too respectful, doesn't it?"
"But you appeared to be showing us some treasures."

"Touché!" I shrugged slightly, but I was impressed with Mitsuko's nimble mind.

Haruyo talked a little roughly at times, but Mitsuko was always delicately feminine in her speech.

"I like Bansui's poems, too."

"Frankly, I like Bansui better. I can even recite his Tenchi Ujo (Sentient Heaven and Earth)."

"Bansui isn't simple."

"If you like Toson, you must like Kyukin, too."

"I know Kyukin only by name. I haven't read him yet."

"I have some of his works in Tokyo. I'll send you several of them. Kyukin has a distinct individualism, quite in contrast to Bansui and Toson."

"How about European poems? I think English ones must

be charming."

"I don't find them so. Maybe it's because my knowledge of English is still too limited to understand their true meaning."

"I remember I once read a translation of a certain poem

of a certain poet in a certain periodical."

"You certainly are full of 'certains.' It must have been translated by a certain person." It was fun to tease Mitsuko.

"Yes, it was, well, I'll call it a particular poem—a long

one, by a particularly famous poet."

"Aha! Now we're getting down to particulars."

"Don't tease me!"

"It's all in fun," I said lightly.

"I have the name of the poet on the tip of my tongue. I remember it was a poem about children—seven brothers. Maybe the seven included the father and mother."

"That's Wordsworth's We Are Seven."

"Yes, you're right. It was We Are Seven."

"One was lost but it says there were seven of them all the same. It was about immortality." I explained it fully. As luck would have it, it was a poem I had learned at school.

"Do you think the soul really exists?" she asked me with

a serious look.

"I think so!"
"God, too?"

"Yes, I believe in God."

This was just the opportunity I'd been wishing for to explain pantheism, which at that time was the basis of my spiritual beliefs.

My practical brother, Tsunejiro, who had married the heiress in the hilly village, wrote complaining that I was very slow in visiting him. He stated rather curtly that he had some important business to talk over with me and wanted to see me right away. We hadn't met since I went to his wedding the fall before. I really meant to call on him at once, but Mitsuko was a strong attraction. Also, to reach his village I would have to walk about six miles. I somehow managed those six miles.

As soon as I saw him I asked, "Getting along all right?

Settled down?"

"Certainly! What else could I do? Now Zenzaburo, you don't know the greetings used in common politeness."

"Pardon me for my long silence since I saw you last, Brother!"

"That's right. You should have said so right away."

Tsunejiro was not the school teacher of former days. He looked worthy of being called the young master of a big landowner. He was stocky and handsome enough to have attracted any heiress. His father- and mother-in-law and Joko-san herself came out to talk to me.

Joko-san's parents were hospitable and quite goodnatured. And she was as lovely as ever. Before their marriage she had been called the number one beauty of the village by the go-between, but I found this estimate rather conservative. Joko-san was one of the most beautiful girls I had ever seen. I congratulated Tsunejiro.

"Congratulations to you on your graduation!" he said

as soon as the family left us alone.

"Thanks a lot, Tsunejiro. I've given you a lot of trouble,

haven't I?"

"Not too much. Sorry I didn't answer your letters, but I thought I needn't worry. So you are working for the library. How much do they give you?"

"They pay me \forall 17 a month."
"Ridiculously little, isn't it?"

"I teach Japanese to a foreigner, and make an additional \textstyle{\textstyle{15."}}

"Any more?"
"No more!"

"How can you manage to keep body and soul together on that?"

"It's not easy to get by. But when I need some money I write home for it."

"Any chance of getting an increase?"

"Well, not at present. Moreover, the teaching job is temporary."

"I thought things were pretty bad! That's why I've been

worrying about you. Why don't you get married?"

"Get married?"

"Yes, I've a good prospect for you."

"How can I support a wife, when I can't support myself?"

"I know a girl who would bring you a dowry of five chobu of land (approximately twelve acres). She is a gradu-

ate of Girls' High and attractive, too."

He tried to talk me into getting married. The girl he had in mind was the daughter of a big landowner of the neighboring village and a distant relative of his wife's family. Older people usually advise young men not to marry until they can support themselves, but Tsunejiro was telling me to do the reverse. He tried to persuade me to marry because I couldn't support myself.

"No, I can't," I answered.

"Think it over. You needn't decide right now."

"There is no use thinking it over. I can't think of marrying for another two or three years."

"They say the girl might wait two or three years."

"No! It's absolutely impossible!" I insisted on turning it down.

"You rascal! You have a girl already?"

"No, I haven't, but . . ."

"You want to marry Mitsuko, don't you?"
"Yes," I blurted out, "I do want to marry Mitsuko."

"Why didn't you say so before? Does Kosuke know about it?"

"No, he doesn't. It's my own problem, a problem of my heart."

"Why can't you be more frank with Kosuke and me?

Don't you know we worry about you?"

He wasn't angry because I turned down the marriage. I knew him very well. I thought of the day when he had sworn to fight the principal to square my accounts with him.

"Forgive me, Tsunejiro, for keeping it from you. But

how did you know about it?"

"Haruyo and Yoshida wrote to me."

"They did?"

"They said that when Mitsuko was staying with them

you came over every evening, so they had very pleasant times. I thought it a bit strange."

"So nothing definite was said?"

"No, I was just guessing. But did you know what Mitchan (Mitsuko) went to Tokyo for?"

"Just to know what Tokyo was like."

"No, you foolish boy! That's why you make me worry all the time."

"What do you mean?"

"Mitsuko was sent to Tokyo for an interview with her prospective husband."

"I don't believe it!"

"I heard her father say so with my own ears!"

"What!"

It flashed in to my mind that the underlined post card from Haruyo had been mailed one week after Mitsuko's arrival in Tokyo.

"She was turned down by her prospective groom at the interview. Haruyo may have meant to impose her rejected

sister on you."

"I don't mind what Haruyo might have meant."

"Don't you mind a failure?"

"Every man to his own taste. Why shouldn't I choose her because she was rejected by others though?"

"Are you determined to marry her?"

"I am!"

"If you've really set your heart on her, I'll go and talk it over with Dad right away."

"You needn't do that. I'll do it myself."

"That's why I called you are a gullible guy. The Dai Marus are hard nuts to crack. You see how tricky they are; using you as a makeshift groom."

"You are too suspicious, Tsunejiro."

"Then you have a definite promise from Mitsuko?"

"Not really."

"But you go to see her every day?"

"No, not exactly!"

"How far have you gone with her? What do you talk about?"

"Literature and philosophy."

"What a fool you are!" he laughed.

"What's the joke?"

"It's not literature, nor philosophy they like but

m-o-n-e-y. Money."

"Uncle Daisuke and Haruyo may care for money, but Mitsuko doesn't. She really likes literature and has a flair for it."

"Leave everything to me. I'll fix it up for you. I don't

like to see you cry, as you may remember, Zen."

"Do you think I can't marry Mitsuko without any help?" I said bravely.

"I do, yes. Mitsuko may be all right, but other members of the family would object until all other chances are gone."

"Don't worry! Leave it to our judgment. I am sure of

her tacit consent."

"That 'I'm sure' of yours is not to be trusted."

"I'll make our engagement definite this summer. So please keep this to yourself, Tsunejiro!"

"Look here. Are you sure of that?"

"You bet I am!"

As it began to rain, I stayed all night with Tsunejiro. We drank quite a bit of *sake*, I remember. I found myself to be a good drinker, although I had a hangover the next morning. I left after the rain stopped and reached home by evening.

"Didn't Tsunejiro talk over something serious with you?"
Kosuke asked me. It was obvious that they planned our

meeting.

The following day I went to Dai Marus' to see Mitsuko. Somehow I managed to get in by the rear garden door. Mitsuko was reading a book on the porch of the annex. I hid in the pampas grass. Taking a blade and making a grass

arrow, I aimed it at Mitsuko. It hit her right over her heart.

"Ouch!" She jumped up and looked around. Spying me she smiled and seeing that we were alone she beckoned to me. I sat down on the porch beside her.

"Zen-san, I have been waiting for you," she whispered.

"Really and truly?"

"I waited for you all day yesterday, too."
"Then, Mitsuko-san, may I wait for you?"

"For what?"

"I said for you!"

"Well. . . ."
"Mayn't I?"

"Of course you may."

"Thank you!"

Now I thought I could set my heart at ease.

# Chapter 11

### THE THREE-YEAR PLAN

Our tacit understanding developed into an explicit one, and my visits to the Dai Marus' became more frequent. Mitsuko had simply informed her parents that she wanted to hear me talk about English poetry. They agreed that it was a good idea.

"What shall I read first?" I asked eagerly.

"I'm no good at English," Mitsuko protested weakly.

"Let me find some easy poems," I said.

"Any book will do! Just open one in front of us."

"Shall we read Wordsworth to begin with?"

"You are a little too serious, aren't you, Zen-san?"

"Oh! I see what you mean," I felt a bit foolish at having been so slow to catch on. Mitsuko arranged a plausible ex-

cuse to see me every day.

Fall that year came too quickly. I had to go back to Tokyo, back to the library, and to Mr. Nichol's Japanese lessons. Although I disliked the confinement, I was delighted to be able to read, read, read.

I visited Aoyama but not so frequently as before. Whenever I did go I met some of Yoshida's friends. Most of them were office workers, and I remember they talked a lot about Suzukyu-still a young fellow-who was rumored to have made \\$5,000,000 at a scoop. Yoshida told me that the slang word narikin was coined especially for this man. It's a word used in the game of Japanese chess.

"Suzukyu calls in all the geisha girls in his town and has them dance stark naked. Then he scatters \forall 100 bank notes among the nude dancers," one of Yoshida's friends told us.

"It must be quite a show."

"A famous phrenologist studied his photograph and found that his facial characteristics were exactly the same as those of Napoleon."

"That is what appeared in Industrial Japan."

"He must be a hero, in a way."

When I showed up after about a month's absence, Haruyo said, rather ironically, "You are quite a stranger, Zen-san."

"I've been rather busy lately." That probably sounded like a lame excuse, but I couldn't very well remind her that Mitsuko was no longer here.

"Are you still teaching Japanese?"

"Yes, I am."

"There are a lot of books in the library, aren't there? Since you live among books, you will become a great scholar some day."

"If you lived in a beauty shop, would it make you a

beauty?"

"Don't be cynical!"

"It's the same with books. Unless you master their contents you can't expect to become a scholar."

"Too much make-up may cause a powder burn; won't

too much reading cause a book burn?"

"Perhaps. Just as too much of your wit may make my face burn."

Yoichi lived upstairs and was attending *Hitotsubashi* (Higher Commercial School). In those days government education was supposed to be all powerful and *Hitotsubashi* ranked next to *Akamon* (Tokyo University). Some of its senior class members proudly wore striped slacks with their uniform jackets.

"How do you like the school?" I asked him the usual

question.

"It's wonderful!" Yoichi exclaimed.

"Well begun is half done. Form a habit of working hard from the very beginning." Even though I sounded like a greybeard, it was good advice for Yoichi.

"By the way, Zen-san, you taught English poetry to

Mitsuko in the country, I hear," Haruyo broke in.

"Yes, I did."

"Once in a while, will you come and teach English to Yoichi? He works very hard preparing his English lessons every evening."

"Ken-san may be able to help him," I suggested.

"I'm through with English," Yoshida spoke up quickly. It was obvious that his brother-in-law would have to go it alone, as far as English was concerned.

The talk would drift to gossiping about our home town

whenever the family was alone.

"By the way, Zen-san," Haruyo asked, "have you heard from Mitsuko lately?"

"No, we don't exchange letters."

"Is that so?"

"Is she doing well?"

"She has an offer of marriage, I understand."

"Is her suitor in Tokyo?"

"No!"

"In Tsuruoka?"

"Yes!"

Being a talkative woman, Haruyo blurted it out but immediately began to be wary of giving particulars. "To what family does he belong?"

"He is the eldest son of the Shojis at Shinyashiki. He may have been in the same class with you in middle school."

"He was in Tsunejiro's class. He was a Keio boy (a

graduate of Keio University)."

"You are right. He is working for a finance company, I hear."

"Has it been agreed upon?"

"I don't know for certain, although I think it is a good match."

"The Shojis are a fine family," I said, outwardly approving. However, as it was close to my heart, I went back in a few days and was told that the offer had been turned down because Mitsuko did not agree to it.

"How moody she is! Really it would have been an ad-

mirable match," Haruyo said regretfully.

Mitsuko was as good as her word, I thought. She is waiting for me. Reassured, I carried on with my studies. My plan was set at last. At Shirokane Gakuin there were many foreign teachers, but not one Japanese scholar who made English literature his specialty. A priest was giving lectures in English literature as a makeshift. As I had always felt dissatisfied with this faculty weakness while a student, I made up my mind to correct the defect myself.

It was rumored that Shirokane Gakuin would become a university in the not distant future. If this happened, I would be a professor of the prospective university. This would no doubt satisfy Mitsuko's dream of an ideal husband. Partly with this selfish reason in mind I went to see

Director Matsuzaki one evening.

"Dr. Matsuzaki, I intend to carry on my studies in the

library for another three years. After that will you appoint

me to a teaching position in the Gakuin?"

"Your problem is always on my mind. As soon as there is a vacancy in the middle grade department, I'll give it to you."

"I prefer the college department, sir."

"There is a proper order for everything. You can't become a college professor in one jump. You'll have to start with the middle grade."

"Yes, I understand."

"Are you working hard?"

"Yes, I am. There are quite a number of foreigners on the faculty but no Japanese teacher who has specialized in English literature. In order to attract students, I think Jap-

anese scholars are indispensable."

"That's what I think, too," the director said. "But it is not easy to find such scholars. In most Japanese universities professors of English literature are plentiful, but very few are fluent in English. Dr. Brown once met a professor of a certain university and wondered how he could understand English literature when his ability to speak English was so poor. If you want to master English literature, you should make your English as good as that of an Englishman or an American."

"I see."

"How are you going about your studies?"

"I'm concentrating on reading, sir. I read everything I

can lay my hands on.'

"Besides reading you must practice speaking. Teaching Japanese to Mr. Nichol will help. Another important thing is writing English. Are you trying that?"

"No, sir, I'm not, I'm sorry to say."

"Unless you combine reading, writing and speaking, you won't be qualified even for a middle grade department teacher."

"I know that's true, sir, but to become that competent, I'll have to go abroad, won't I?"

"Some people go abroad, spend some undistinguished time there and come home with little or no improvement. Even though you stay in Japan, with great effort you can

become proficient in your field. So work hard."

It was certain that I should be appointed a teacher in the middle grade department. In the director's eyes I was only a fledgling. He must have had a good laugh when he learned of my ambition to become a professor of English literature. He could speak and write English as if it were his native tongue, not to mention reading it. Whenever he was asked to make a speech, he used to say, "Which language do you wish me to use, Japanese or English?"

I had a long way to go before I could reach his level, I

thought.

"Work hard." I had often given this advice to Yoichi. Now it occurred to me that I was as far below the director as I was above Yoichi.

During the winter that year I again went home, braving the snow. This time it was not for the sake of codfish broth but to see Mitsuko. Because we had not been exchanging letters, I felt rather helpless. I was anxious to tell her that I should shortly be appointed to a teaching job in the middle grade department. To my great disappointment I found out that she was away with her parents at a hot spring resort.

Now I lost no time going to see Tsunejiro.

"I say! Are you sure?" he asked when I told him my intention.

"Almost as firm as a rock!"

"You say 'almost' again!"
"Almost as firm as a rock!" I repeated.

"I don't like that 'almost.'"
"Then, as firm as a rock."

"Have it definitely arranged while you are here. Let me do it."

"I'll do it myself!"

I was foolish enough to mistake Tsunejiro's kindness for an annoying interference. Nothing short of a marriage through romance would satisfy me. Reading Western novels, I had become infatuated with their ideas.

"They had marriage talks from time to time, I am sure,

because I was always on the lookout."

"But Mitsuko kept refusing. That's my proof of assurance."

"That may be proof of lack of assurance as well. If her refusals were because of her promise to you, there shouldn't have been so many marriage talks."

"Not many. Only one as far as I know."

"No, there were at least two or three. Maybe four."

"Is that so?" I was very surprised to hear this. My brother's harsh words were hard to take, but I had to admit

he was right.

My home-coming in the snow ended in complete failure. I could see the pleasant faces of my parents and brothers, but I saw nothing of Mitsuko, the sole object of my winter travels. I remember that Kosuke's wife was pregnant then. The baby that came was Kiyoshi.

# Chapter 12

#### THE BIRD HAD FLOWN

Spring had come and the new school year had begun, but I still remained a lowly librarian and a tutor of Japanese to Mr. Nichol. There being no vacancy to fill, I was no better off than before.

"Wait another year. If you can't get by, I'll find some extra work for you," said the director.

I was quite satisfied with that because I believed Mit-

suko would be willing to wait for me a year or more.

Since Tsunejiro had warned me, however, I decided to visit Aoyama as often as I could. One afternoon when the cherry trees were covered with green leaves, I was surprised to find Aunt Tami when I arrived at the Yoshida home.

"The time has come for husband and wife to be separated. Mom has come to take Haruyo away," Yoshida said.

"What do you mean?" I asked in amazement.

"Pregnancy!"

"Has she got to be divorced because of pregnancy?"
Being facetious helped me overcome my surprise.

"She's going home for her confinement. That's separation

of husband and wife for the time being, isn't it?"

"Well, I must say I'm truly surprised!"

"Hadn't you noticed, Zen-san? I'm due next month!"

Saying this Haruyo flung both sleeves of her *haori* (short coat) open. She had no false modesty, and this made Yoshida adore her all the more. He thought her artless and naive. In fact she was neither; she was both clever and tricky, as I was to discover later on.

Aunt Tami had brought with her an old servant who would take charge of the housekeeping during Haruyo's absence. It seemed that Haruyo's mother had everything carefully planned. If I married Mitsuko she would probably be

just as thoughtful of us.

"Are you still working for the school, Zen-san?" Aunt Tami asked.

"Yes, Aunty."

"Are you a teacher?"

"No, I'm still the librarian."

"Your uncle said you would do better if you found a job with a business firm."

"Mom, don't say that! He'll be angry with you!" Haruyo interrupted. She teased me every time she got a chance.

I remember calling on Yoshida only once during Ha-

ruyo's absence. A home without its mistress is no home at all. Yoshida was in low spirits, and I very much missed my antagonist. Toward the end of May I remembered our pleasant excursion strawberry picking last year.

"I'll treat you to strawberries next Sunday," I told a few

students who used to come to the library.

They were all glad to go with me. The day was bright and fine. A lark was flying high up in the sky and Mt. Fuji was in view.

Everything was the same as last year. I picked a little flower by the road and asked the students, "Do you know what this flower is called in English?"

No one knew. I told them it was called a forget-me-not and was supposed to be the symbol of loyalty and friendship.

Of course I recalled my dear Mitsuko who tucked the bunch of forget-me-nots I gave her in her obi. That was one

excursion I would never forget.

When I got back to the dormitory, I found a letter from Tsunejiro. It said: "You idiot! The bird has flown away. My worst fears have been realized! I'm dumbfounded. You darn fool."

It was written in big characters. I was dazed. My glasses blurred and perspiration popped out all over me. I took my glasses off and looked at his letter again. He must have been terribly angry. The scattered ink blots told the story. I rushed to the post-office and wired: "Is it definite? I'll come. Reply."

The following morning an answer came: "Don't come. It's too late. Don't lose your head. Avoid more shame. Letter

follows."

While I was waiting for Tsunejiro's letter, I received an unexpected note from Haruyo:

Pardon my long silence. I gave birth to a daughter without any trouble. Mitsuko has made a good catch and is going to get married next month. The groom-

to-be is Masanobu, heir of the Sagara family of Shinmachi, and our distant relative. He is a lieutenant in the army.

Tsunejiro's letter explained the matter more fully. As he had suspected, the family had kept me as a last resort. He was angry at what had happened in spite of his repeated warnings:

You tried to win her with your literature and philosophy. But all the Dai Maru people most care for is money and position. The Sagara family has been one of the wealthiest and influential ever since feudal times. Besides, a lieutenant in the army is a strong attraction. Masanobu was Kosuke's classmate and I know him well. He is a nice fellow, not really a soldier. He came home from the war without the Order of the Golden Kite (decoration for distinguished military service), which reveals his personality. He isn't marrying Mitsuko to spite you. In fact he is entirely ignorant of your suit, so you should bear no grudge against him. The Dai Marus traditionally have a strong family spirit. Uncle Daisuke and Aunt Tami are really not so bad. They're doing this out of a sense of parental duty. You shouldn't let yourself be on bad terms with them either. In my opinion the wirepuller was Haruyo. She persuaded Mitsuko to ditch you. However, she too did it for her sister's good, thinking a lieutenant was better than a librarian. So you've got to forgive her. . . .

It was unlike Tsunejiro to be so moderate. He closed the letter:

Zenzaburo! Never forget that you were thrown over for a lieutenant. Go out and become a big suc-

cess and make the Dai Maru people sorry for what they've done to you. I'm writing this letter with tears in my eyes.

I, too, cried when I read his touching message. I felt

thankful to have such a brother.

I had known all along about the Dai Marus' love for money and social position. They had wanted an office worker for their daughter's husband. When Mitsuko turned down an office worker, I felt safe. Now all of a sudden, a soldier popped out of nowhere to carry her off. I had never dreamed of a soldier. Was Mitsuko doing this of her own free will or was she under too much family pressure? If it

was the latter, she was to be pitied.

When I recovered my presence of mind, I thought the matter over carefully. Although I believed our understanding had become a definite promise, I couldn't help finding a flaw in my reasoning. "I was waiting for you," Mitsuko had said when we were alone on that memorable day. "May I wait for you, Mitsuko-san?" I then said. It was all that I could ask, although what I meant was waiting to marry her at some future time. "By all means!" she had answered laughing. That I thought she would wait until I could propose was really a bit far fetched now that I look back on it. She meant she would wait for me to hear me talk about poetry during the summer holidays. We must take the context into consideration. She had laughed, too, so she hadn't been serious. She was merely joking, and I was the one who had been in dead earnest. That is the whole story.

Washington Irving, after the death of his fiancée, remained a bachelor for the rest of his life. He was said to have slept with his sweetheart's Bible and prayer book under his pillow. In my case the recovery from unrequited love was rather fast. Also, the other person was alive. She threw me over to marry an army lieutenant. She was quite free to do just that. I might as well admit my defeat, but fool that

I was, I made up my mind to show her which of us, Masanobu or I, was the better man.

Again I went home for the summer. I found out that Mitsuko had left for Nagoya right after her wedding.

Haruyo had already gone back to Tokyo.

It is said that a man in reduced circumstances suffers doubly. While feeling the pinch of poverty, he must try to pretend that he is doing as well as ever. So it is with a rejected lover. He must try to be pleasant and not wear his heart on his sleeve.

The evening I arrived at home I called on the Dai Marus

as though nothing had happened.

Uncle Daisuke was away and Aunt Tami came to meet me. She asked me about Aoyama, but as I hadn't been there for quite some time I couldn't tell her anything! For a while she looked quite ill at ease. I was groping in the dark, not knowing what to say.

It was some time before she mentioned what was in both

our minds.

"You know Mitsuko has married," she said hesitantly.
"Yes, I came over to congratulate you. Omedeto, Aunt
Tami," I said warmly, but the words came from a cold heart.
I found that I was a pretty good actor.

"As we had a suitable offer we gave her in marriage,"

Aunt Tami said calmly.

"I didn't know a thing about it and am sorry. I couldn't send a congratulatory telegram."

"Don't be so formal, Zen-san."

Up to now I had been all right. Then Aunt Tami got up and brought over a photograph to show me. It was a picture of the wedding. Beside Lieutenant Masanobu Sagara in full military ceremonial dress with decorations was seated Mitsuko in a dress with a colorful design on the skirt and with a takashimada hairdo.

"Well, I have a faint recollection of the groom."

"You should know him, for he was Kosuke's classmate."

"Was he really? No wonder he's a lieutenant then!"
"He will apply to the Military Staff College shortly."

"Mitsuko-san looks beautiful in the picture," I said, my heart thumping madly.

"That design on the skirt of her kimono was especially

dyed to order at Kyoto at Mitsuko's request."

"Are they cherry blossoms?"

"Yes, 'wild cherry blossoms glowing in the morning sun,' as the poem goes, because he is a soldier."

"Did Mitsuko-san herself agree to the wedding?"

"Yes, she became very keen on it as soon as she had an interview with Masanobu. Everything went off very

smoothly."

Soon afterwards I left, feeling completely defeated. Outside the earth under my feet seemed to be shaking. I knew it was only my emotional earthquake, but my knees knocked against each other, making me stagger. I sat down on the roadway and looked up at the sky. The stars and the Milky Way seemed to overwhelm me.

"Ah, ah! I can't die as a librarian. Surely I must get on

in the world," I said to myself.

## Chapter 13

#### TO AMERICA

I had no grudge against Lieutenant Masanobu Sagara. Nevertheless, I felt my whole body burn when I realized that I had been discarded as though a raw recruit in favor of an army lieutenant. I could not sleep that night, tossing about in bed. One by one I went over the whole series of events. How badly Mitsuko had treated me! In fancy I fol-

lowed her figure, standing amid falling petals of cherry blossoms, or dressed in a kimono with cherry blossoms and the sun.

Mitsuko alone was not to blame. I realize now that I should have written to her sometimes. On my return to Tokyo last September, I had tried to draft a letter of proposal. But thinking that we already had an understanding, I destroyed the few lines I had already written. I was overconfident. How could she know that I was deeply in love with her. I had never expressed my feelings in any way. She might have been waiting for me after all. Though she loved me, could she have proposed herself? Sometimes she must have doubted my love. And worst of all, I had always tried to be circumspect and dignified around her. I never had made a confidente of Haruyo, although I visited her home often.

Mitsuko surely had been waiting for me when she declined the first marriage offer but since then had had no way of knowing my intentions. She had continued to turn down marriage interviews to the annoyance of her father and mother. Then came Sagara's proposal. The Sagaras are a rich and renowned family of the prefecture. As fate would have it, Haruyo, Mammonite, was at home to have her baby. Haruyo must have persuaded Mitsuko and Mitsuko acquiesced at last.

No! No! That can't be true. The reason I gave up writing the letter of proposal was that I believed there was no necessity for it. Yes, there was an implicit promise, a heart-to-heart understanding. But Mitsuko could not bear to wait any longer. So came the cherry blossoms glittering in the morning sun. I had no grudge against Mitsuko nor against Sagara. But I had to fight as a man. Mitsuko is going to be sorry some day and find out who was the better man for her husband, Masanobu Sagara or Zenzaburo Maruo, I said

to myself.

Father and Mother knew nothing of my troubles. Kosuke might have heard about it from Tsunejiro, but he pretended

not to know. When I met him at breakfast the following morning, he said, "Tsunejiro is waiting for you. You'd better

go to see him right after breakfast."

I hurried to the hillside village. Two years had passed since Tsunejiro married into this family. His wife had recently given birth to a son. In spite of his being a lazy correspondent, he wrote to me curtly in his usual large characters: "Boy was born. I have accomplished my stud duty without a hitch." Being fully aware of his lot, he was diligently pursuing his family business. During my primary school days when any boy bullied me he would lie in wait for him in front of his house. When the boy came out, Tsunejiro would beat him up. It was quite natural now that he should be resentful of my lost love. He kept telling me not to be discouraged and not to lose heart.

"I've a favor to ask you, Tsunejiro," I said.

"Nothing can be done now that the bird has flown," he replied.

"I'm not trying to find the lost bird. But I can't let things go on as they are. I cried all last night thinking of my

disgrace."

I told him that Aunt Tami showed me Mitsuko's wedding picture and I had made a vow to get over my broken heart by becoming a big success.

"That is just the reason I warned you so often. You

should have left the matter to me!" he said sternly.

"But I believed I could manage it myself." "That's why I said you were soft in the head."

"And you were right."

"The Dai Marus are Mammonites. With them dollars and social position are all important and learning is secondary," Tsunejiro continued. "I see."

"This family trait naturally was inherited by Mitsuko. You should have seen it in Haruyo, Zenzaburo."

"I thought Mitsuko was different!"

"That's because you were stupid. Doesn't the peacock spread his tail to attract the peahen? You displayed your literature and philosophy but she wasn't the sort to be enchanted by them."

"How foolish I was!"

"Well, Sagara displayed gold braid and glittering decorations. A peahen loves anything that shines, you know. All the time, too, I was afraid that money would have the brightest glow of all."

"Will you forgive me, Tsunejiro? I was wrong about the

whole thing."

"If we were boys I'd go and beat up Sagara right now and put an end to it. But in adult life that can't be done. Don't go about moping. Forget everything."

"No, I won't forget!"
"What do you mean?"

"I'm going to get back at Sagara!"

"Don't be stupid! Sagara doesn't know a thing. He's

perfectly innocent."

"I know that, but I was jilted because of him. I want to be able to look down on him some day. Mitsuko is going to regret her choice. I'm going to be one of the best scholars in Japan."

"Good! Go ahead and fight."

"Well, then, I've a favor to ask you. Will you please lend me \forall 200?"

"What do you want it for?"

"To go to America!"

Many of our alumni had gone to America. Once they were there, they managed to carry on their studies while working. Up to now I had not followed their examples purposely, but now I had no choice but to major in English literature in America. There was no other way. If I stayed in Japan, Sagara would be promoted to captain while I would remain a librarian. Even though I obtained a middle school teacher's job, I could not surpass him. To become a

university professor I needed to go to America to acquire fluency in English and to study English literature under noted teachers.

Tsunejiro not only agreed to my proposal but highly approved of my plan. Being pugnacious and adventurous

by nature, he heartily encouraged me.

"Of course, I'll furnish some money but I'll talk it over with Dad and Mom and Kosuke and have them help you still more. You should have at least \delta1,000 or you will feel panicky."

"No, I need only \formula 100 for travelling expenses and another \formula 100 for pocket money. The rest I'll earn while going

to school. All of our alumni have done it that way."

"On a trip money is the greatest help, especially in America, so far from home. Tomorrow I'll go and see Dad and Kosuke and persuade them to give you some money, too."

"No, it's all right. I'll talk to them!"

"You rascal! Are you going to disobey me again!" he thundered.

After spending a night with him, I went home. Tsunejiro came with me and brought up the matter as he had promised. Father had a doubtful look, but Mother stared at me in amazement.

"Dad, Zenzaburo has made up his mind on this, so please do as he asks. He will surely reach the top some day." Kosuke's intercession sounded convincing.

"You could do the same studying in Japan, couldn't

you?"

"No, Dad, as I'm majoring in English, I've got to go to America. The English of the middle-school teachers around here is made-in-Japan English. To learn proper English I must go to America. You know the proverb, 'To catch a tiger's cub you must brave the tiger's den.'"

"In Japan if you associate with foreigners, wouldn't it

be the same?"

"No, it wouldn't, Dad. Here in Japan I can't always be

with them. It's only when I teach Japanese to a foreigner two or three times a week. If I go over to America I'll have to speak English from morning till night. Unless I speak it properly I can't expect to attain proficiency. The change would brighten up my spirits."

"What do you mean by 'brightening up your spirits'?"

"Well, because he works inside a dark library all day long," Kosuke answered quickly. At last Father said he would think it over. After he and Mother left we three had a talk.

"Was Sagara a brilliant fellow in middle school, Kosuke?" Tsunejiro asked.

"He wasn't brilliant but a hard-working type and a fine

personality, too."

"Will he be promoted as high as lieutenant colonel?"

"A full colonel is certain, but if he goes through staff

college, he may become a general."

"Good! In that case Zen will find competing still more worthwhile." There was a determined look on Kosuke's face as he turned to me.

"Be sure to look down on Masanobu Sagara! Become the number one scholar in Japan!"

"Yes, I will, Kosuke!"

"I'll see that Dad and Mom follow through all right," Tsunejiro promised.

"Thank you, my brothers!" I bowed, touching both hands

on the tatami.

### Chapter 14

#### MY FIRST YEAR IN AMERICA

September 21, 1906

I find myself in a cosy little room, in the home of Dr. Peter Peterson, professor at the University of Indiana. Though a stranger in a strange land, thousands of miles away from home, my heart is cheered by the kindness of Dr. and Mrs. Peterson. Dr. Peterson was a classmate of Dr. Matsuzaki, Director of Shirokane Gakuin, through whose good offices I obtained a scholarship at this university. In the daytime I attend classes and in the evening I study. I am determined to make the most of this fine opportunity.

The above is an extract from my diary. In the beginning I kept a diary in English, thinking it would help improve my speech, but it did not last long. I soon lapsed into writing English only when I was impressed by something or when something unusual happened. A fair amount of money had been furnished by my parents and brothers, and with the scholarship I received I could dispense with working for my school expenses. It was my good fortune to live with the English literature professor. The above extract shows how deeply grateful I was and how strongly determined to work.

My sojourn in America lasted for six years. As I cannot remember distinctly all the details of my life there, I shall give you some parts of my diary. While going through it I felt young again and found myself shedding tears because

so many of the people who were good to me have already died.

October 1, 1906

Since arriving here I have been surprised to see so many beautiful women. In the first place, Mrs. Peterson is a beauty. She is charming though a little on the elderly side. She and her husband have no children. Their three nieces come to see them from time to time, and they also are beautiful. Mary, the maid, would be called a beauty in Japan. Most of the coeds are lovely, although some exceptions are inevitable. My impression is that America is the country of the beautiful. A woman with a fair complexion and a shapely high nose is the epitome of Japanese pulchritude. A convex profile is the essential factor of good looks. On the contrary, a concave profile as represented by the Okame mask (a snub-nosed smiling woman) is typical of ugliness. Because they have high noses, Westerners all belong to the convex type. Some of the men are too convex and remind us of a mask of Tengu (a goblin with a long nose like a beak). Because they are Caucasian they are all fairskinned. We have a saying: "A white complexion conceals seven blemishes." As they are blessed with both convexity and a white skin, American women cannot help being beautiful.

Thus I was deeply impressed with American beauty. Naturally my weakness was for feminine beauty, and wherever I went I met lovely girls and secretly admired them. One of the coeds who was quite striking looking, with a high nose and flashing eyes, attracted my special attention.

"How beautiful she is!" I said one day, stopping dead

in my tracks to admire her.

"She is Jewish. Didn't you know?" said John Randolph, my classmate.

"What is wrong with being Jewish? Rebecca in *Ivanhoe* was a charming Jewess! I fell in love with her picture at first sight," I protested. Not wishing to get into an argument about racial discrimination, I let it go at that.

October 10, 1906

After dinner tonight Dr. Peterson asked me if I belonged to a samurai family. I told him I did. He then asked if there were many swords in my home, and again I said yes. Immediately, the doctor took out a sword which had been brought back by his father from his tour in Japan as a young man, and asked me to judge it. Since I admitted being a samurai's son I could not confess my ignorance of swords in general. Placing a handkerchief between my teeth with an air of importance, I unsheathed the sword and gazed at it from the guard up to the point.

"When you judge a sword do you have to keep a handkerchief in your mouth?" the doctor asked.

"In formal ceremonies we use white paper, but I am substituting a handkerchief to prevent the sword from blurring with my breath."

"Oh I see. Who made the sword?"

I unriveted the hilt and examined the engraved signature. It was signed "Kanesada." Poor connoisseur that I was, I knew Masamune and Muramasa but no others. As I had heard of a famous swordsmith in Osafune, Bizen Province (now Okayama-ken), I intoned, "This is made by a famed swordsmith called Kanesada, of Osafune, Bizen Province. It is a rare sword even in Japan."

The doctor was pleased at my critical report. Then he brought out an old piece of paper, saying, "This is another keepsake of my father's Japanese tour. It has a stamp in red. It may be an important document of the Tokugawa Shogunate regime."

It was hard to keep from laughing. The important

document was a receipted bill his father and companions had gotten one evening at a Yoshiwara brothel called Kado-Ebi. The amount was \\$\foat32.50.

"This is also a rarity."

"What is it? Is it of any antique value?"

"Not at all. But it reveals your father's amiable disposition."

"Tell me what it says!" Mrs. Peterson peered over

my shoulder.

"This is the receipt for a donation, amounting to \\foat332.50, your father made toward the relief of unhappy women."

"Is that right? He always was charitable," the

doctor said proudly.

"But. . . ."
"What is it?"

"As the Bible teaches us not to let the left hand know what the right hand is doing, it would be better not to show this paper to other people. This would tie right in with the spirit your father showed in making this contribution."

Dr. Peterson began to call me Young Samurai. He took pleasure in cracking a joke. On reading the English version of the Forty-Seven Loyal Ronins that I had brought over, he seemed to have taken quite a fancy to samurai. About this time Tsunejiro, always affectionate toward me, wrote a letter of thanks to Dr. Peterson in surprisingly broken English. He asked in his letter for the doctor's continued kindness on behalf of his "samurai gentleman brother," and said in token of his gratitude he had forwarded "a very bad thing of Japan!" The professor asked what the "very bad thing of Japan" meant. I explained that in Japan, when making presents to one's superior or esteemed friend, one said, "Please accept my humble present . . ." out of modesty. He must have said "very bad" instead of "humble." While I was wondering what was on the way, a box of yokan

(sweet jelly of red beans) was delivered by parcel post. I begged Tsunejiro not to write any more notes in English, but he often sent letters in made-in-Japan English, even

years later, to Dr. Peterson's delight.

As it was not long after the Russo-Japanese war, we Japanese felt exalted wherever we went. Americans were in the main pro-Japanese. Japan owed a lot to America for her successful peace treaty. America was pleased that Japan had matured under her guidance. Being the only Japanese living in Indianapolis in those days, I attracted a good deal of attention. People often stopped to speak to me in the street and smiled at me wherever I went.

November 7, 1906

Wandering around the campus with Bob Mitchel, Howard Jones and Melvin Johnson after school today, we came across some pretty coeds. One of them came over and, with a charming smile, said to me, "Please!" She stretched out her foot to me. The string of her shoe was untied. I had to tie it for her. Smiling her thanks, she rejoined her friends and walked away.

"What a lucky boy you are," said Bob.

"Why?"

"Because that pretty girl asked you to tie her shoe string."

"Wasn't that an insult to me? Didn't she have me

tie it for her because I'm a Japanese?"

"No, not in the least. It was an honor."

"Is it an honor to tie a shoestring for a lady?"

"Suppose a lovely young lady were in distress in a strange land and several of us met her. Suppose the lady needed help from only one of us. She would instinctively select the one to whom she could entrust her future."

"I see!"

"That bright girl picked you, by which she meant she would be prepared to fall in love with you. What could be more honorable! You looked annoyed but, if I had been in your place, I would have thrown myself at her feet with 'Thank you, thank you!' What would you have done, Howard?"

"I would have offered a thousand thanks!" How-

ard agreed enthusiastically.

I had been taught to respect ladies, but it was a big surprise to me to know that tying a shoestring for one was an honor.

December 10, 1906

Dr. Peterson used to come to my room in the evening for a long talk. On such occasions he would say the chimney of his study was smoking. Taking advantage of the opportunity, I asked various questions about my literary studies. He always gave enlightening answers.

When Mary came to clean my room she asked,

"How long did Dr. Peterson stay last night?"

"Until about ten."

"It smoked pretty badly last night!"

"The chimney smokes all the time, doesn't it?"

"Yes, Mrs. Chimney does!"

"What?"

"I mean Mrs. Peterson!"

"Oh! I see."

At last I caught on. It was Mrs. Peterson who smoked. Whenever she nagged him, he sought shelter in my room. I remembered once in a while he went out and came back saying, "Still smoking."

"Shall I try to mend it?" I said.

"No, no, no, no, no," the doctor said, shaking his head emphatically. Mrs. Peterson is larger than Dr. Peterson. Though beautiful and accomplished, she seems to be a hard chimney to sweep when she begins to smoke.

#### CHAPTER 15

### MEMORIES OF THE LAND OF BEAUTY

The curving creek sings songs of loneliness;
Bereft of scarlet leaves the maples sigh,
No longer vying with the golden dress
Of proud chrysanthemums that soon will die.
Once more September ninth with welcome sun
Brings festive hours alike to child and man
Who climb the hallowed hill to look upon.
The mountains of their treasured native land.
And while the joyful noises fill the air
I stand beside a gnarled and ancient pine,
My thoughts of home like sacred beads of prayer
Strung hopefully within this heart of mine.
A stranger here for three predestined years
I find my sleeves too often wet with tears.

—Translated from Tsui Kuo-pu Chines

—Translated from Tsui Kuo-pu, Chinese poet of 1000 years ago

In America the fall of the year is wonderful. There are not as many chrysanthemums as there are in Japan, but the flaming gypsy colors of the trees give the landscape a never-to-be-forgotten magnificence. When I thought of autumn in Japan, I yearned for the sight of my home.

I made up my mind to have my picture taken and send it to my parents. Both Kosuke and Tsunejiro begged me to do this but somehow I kept putting it off. Now the time had

come to answer their pleas.

Unlike the Chinese poet who felt homesick after three

years in a strange land, I had been in America only a little more than one year. I was twenty-five, in the best of health and, as Kiyoshi assured me in later years, I would have been a winning steed in any horse show by this time. In the United States a Japanese may find many occasions when he is forced to own what a poor figure he cuts among American people. Most Americans are surprisingly large. It is true that some Americans are smaller than I. But on the whole, it is as though I were a layman among professional wrestlers.

Most humiliating of all is my yellowish skin. What we regard as light dark skin would look yellow among Caucasians. While walking in the street one day I caught a glimpse of quite a yellow-skinned fellow and was feeling relieved to find another of my species. To my disgust I found it to be my own reflection in the show-window mirror.

Under such circumstances I could not bring myself to have my picture taken light-heartedly. But at last I made up my mind and visited a first-rate photographer in the city, the Philip Collins Photo Studio. When I approached the entrance, a girl's voice called to me from upstairs, "Hello!"

"Hello," I said, looking up. I found that the voice belonged to Jane Collins, the coed who once had bestowed on me the honor of tying her loose shoelace. We hadn't become friends, but we always spoke pleasantly when we met. When I got inside, she was already downstairs and greeted me cheerfully. I told her I wanted my picture taken so that I might send it to my parents in Japan. Then she brought in her father and introduced me to him.

"Dad, this is a schoolmate of mine, Zenzaburo Maruo. He wants his picture taken. He's sending it to his fiancée in Japan so you must make it one of your masterpieces,"

she said jokingly.

After Jane took me into the living room, Mr. Collins followed in a few minutes. They wanted to hear me talk about Japan. Mr. Collins said he was an ardent Japanophile

and praised Japan highly by calling Russia Goliath and

Japan David.

After the Russo-Japanese War Americans in general felt and showed good will toward Japan. When I recall those days, I feel as if we are living in a different world now. Jane's mother joined us and asked about Japan. As the mother of an adolescent daughter she must have been over forty but was still very attractive. In America it seemed to me all the women I came across were beautiful.

When Americans interested in Japan met Japanese, they would ask about *katana* (Japanese sword) and samurai. These words had been incorporated in English dictionaries and were widely known among Americans. Taking advantage of this fact, a Japanese curio dealer was operating his business under the name of Samurai Company.

"Do you come from a samurai family, Mr. Maruo?"

asked Mr. Collins.

"Yes, I belong to the samurai class."
"Then have you ever seen harakiri?"

"Yes, I have. A samurai committed suicide by cutting his own abdomen crosswise with a short *katana*. The blood came gushing out, and his white kimono was drenched with red...."

"Oh, my God!" Mrs. Collins cried, nearly fainting.

"Don't be alarmed! I'm only telling you what I've seen on the stage."

"You are making fun of us, aren't you?"

"Forgive me, Mrs. Collins."

"That's all right."

Sanguinary topics are taboo in good society. Americans are a peace-loving people. They hate to see bloody scenes even on the stage. A character may be killed as planned in the script, but after the final curtain falls it goes up again, and both the murderer and the victim will appear and greet the audience just to make them feel happy again. We have no curtain calls in Japan.

"Japanese people eat fish raw, I hear. Is that true?" Mrs.

Collins asked, shrugging her shoulders. I said it was not true. Then she said she had once read, in a book about traveling in Japan, that the aborigines eat raw fish dipped in soy sauce. She meant sashimi (sliced raw fish). Things sound different with different words. To "eat fish raw" scunds uncivilized but, as there is no English equivalent for sashimi, I had a hard time making it understood. I explained that the fish is sliced with a special sashimi knife, in this manner—showing how to do it by gesture—and arranged on a plate in an artistic manner with assorted fresh vegetable garniture. I told them that it was an elegant dish as well as a nourishing one.

The talk shifted from fish to octopus, which goes by another English name, devil fish. Maybe because of its grotesque name and shape, Westerners—especially Americans—do not eat it. Indiana being far inland—the nearest ocean beach is three or four states away—neither the master

nor the mistress had any idea of its shape.

To their query I answered, "A cuttlefish has two long tentacles and eight arms, while an octopus has eight arms only. Wait a moment, I'll illustrate it for you." I drew a picture of an octopus, and explained, "These arms have many sucking disks on them. They get gradually bigger, and at the crotch there is a mouth."

"Japanese obis are beautiful, aren't they, Mr. Maruo?" Miss Jane tactfully changed the subject from octopus to

obi. Obi is another borrowed word in English.

"The beauties of Japanese ladies' costumes lies in obia and furisode (long-sleeved garment). Obis are colorfully embroidered, while furisode are dyed in many artistic designs, such as 'wild cherry-blossoms glowing in the morning sunshine'," I explained, remembering the photograph of the wedding of Mitsuko and Masanobu Sagara. Because there was such a picture, I was in America. The moment I spoke about the design of Mitsuko's furisode, my heart started pounding. Silently I scolded myself for being sentimental.

"Well, I think I must be going now," I said politely.

Before I called for the proofs, Miss Jane Collins delivered them to me at school. She told me I might select one of the three poses that I liked best. All three of them showed a smart young gentleman, thanks to her father's skillful photography.

"How smart you look! Your fiancée in Japan will be

pleased to see it."

"I have no fiancée, Miss Collins."

"Is that right?"
"Certainly it is!"

"By the way, do you have time to take a walk with me?"

"Of course."

I cut classes to go with her. The campus was large and there were several hills and brooks. American universities on the whole are very big.

"Will you tell me more about Japan?"

"With pleasure, but I'm afraid of talking to a lady."

"Why?"

"My English is poor for one thing."

"Not in the least. Mom admires you, and asked me how

long you have been over here."

So Miss Jane liked my English. Americans are complimentary. They asked me how long I had been in America and looked at me admiringly.

It was pleasant to walk around the spacious campus with beautiful Miss Jane. She was a natural blonde, and

her golden hair shimmered in the sunshine.

"Miss Collins!"

"Yes?"

"What has impressed me most since I came over to America is that all women are beautiful here. It is really a great honor to me to go walking with you. To me you're the campus beauty queen." I honestly confessed what I felt.

"It's the same with me. It's an honor to go out with a

representative young man of Japan."

"How grateful I am! Do you remember some time ago

you asked me to tie up your loose shoelace?"

"How could I forget it! Since then I have been hoping to become friends with you. Because I like Japan very much."

"We've often met since then."

"I was so pleased when you came to my house."

Jane was twenty, four years younger than I. She told me she had got out of her teens on her last birthday, but she was two years ahead of me in school. Because my name Zenzaburo was not easy for Americans to pronounce, she asked to call me Jimmy.

"You are majoring in literature, Jimmy, I understand."

"Yes, I am. And you?"

"My subject is sociology. You will be a professor when you go home, won't you?"

"Yes, I expect so."

"I hope to go to Japan. When I get my degree in

sociology I can be of some help to society."

"Quite a number of American missionaries are in Japan. They are trying to help society, too. The school I graduated from is a mission school."

We took a number of walks together after that. When you feel happy it is hard to keep it to yourself. One day on my way home from school with my friend Bob and Howard I told them I was in love.

"You lucky dog!" Howard cried, slapping me on the back. He was such a big strong fellow that his light slap

almost knocked me down.

Bob congratulated me too, but a little less violently. Together we went to Howard's room and talked about love. There was a big bowl of apples on the table. Nobody's appetite was hurt by the talk on love. Howard peeled a Winesap and swung the long unbroken skin over his head three times before letting it fall behind his back.

"No luck!"

"Let me try." Bob did the same.

"Not hopeless."

"What are you doing?" I asked.

I was told that if the peeled skin fell into the shape of a letter it would be that of the girl of your dreams. I tried. The skin broke in two in the air. When the pieces fell, neither formed the letter J.

I had never told Dr. Peterson about Jane, but he must have seen us taking a walk. One evening at dinner he asked,

"You've got a girl friend, haven't you, Maruo?"

"Yes, sir, she is a junior."

"You may date her, but be careful that she's not a flirt."

"Yes, sir."

"Those are words of wisdom, Mr. Maruo," Mrs. Peterson added.

Tsunejiro sent me yokan from time to time. Dr. and Mrs. Peterson learned the Japanese word yokan because he sent the same thing over and over. This time he sent me fox-faced millet and rice cake along with the yokan. A letter was enclosed in which he said that the fox-faced cake was a warning not to forget myself. He was worried about my writing him that America was the country of convex beauty. He warned me against falling in love with a second Mitsuko far away in this strange land. How could I forget home! Because I did not forget it, did I not send my picture? He was worrying about nothing.

However, life is full of follies. It seems difficult to go through the world without tampering with them. After the first and the second I was about to commit the third folly of life, although it was a fairly slight one. At such a time one is likely to pay no attention to good advice from any

source.

When winter came, we could not go for any more walks. "I can't hear you talk about Japan and I feel sad," Jane said one day. But she did not invite me to come to her house. If I had been smarter, I should have guessed her

mind at this time. When spring came, however, we resumed our usual walks on the campus but never on my initiative.

It was nearly summertime when we found ourselves talking one day, sitting on the bank of the brook. The topic

was Japan, as usual.

"Although I've been going with you since last year, you have never talked in Japanese to me, Jimmy. Please say something in Japanese!"

"But I'm afraid you won't understand me."

"That doesn't matter. Say anything at all in Japanese!" "O-hayo!"

"That I know very well. 'Good morning' is next door

to our state."

At this moment I was struck with a good idea.

"Jane-san, Watashi Wa Anata O O-Yome Ni Moraitain Desu. Dozo Watashi No Kanai Ni Natte Kudasai. (Miss Jane, I want to have you as my bride. Please be my wife.)"

"What?"

"Do you understand me?"

"No, I don't! What did you say?"

"I said, it is very fine today. We can not find a speck of cloud."

"Say something else!"

"Anata Ga Goshochi Kudasaru Koto O Shinji Masu. Daijobu Desho Ne? (I believe you will consent to my proposal. May I depend upon it?) Do you understand me? Daysho nay?"

"No, I don't. The last part was a question, wasn't it?"

"Yes, you are right. I said 'We've been talking quite a

long time.' Don't you think we should be going now?"

A few days later on the same walk I had a good opportunity to propose in English. We found ourselves on the same bank of the brook.

"I wish I could go to Japan right away," Jane began.

"Yes, let's go together."

"But you will have to stay here another three years, won't you?"

"Yes, I may have to stay here another three or maybe four years but some day we can go."

"When I think of life in Japan, I feel as though many

happy events are in store for us."

"Yes, a pleasant life is waiting for you and. . . ."

"Yes, it should be a new and happy time."

"Miss Jane, er. . . . Jane, you like me, don't you?"

"Why? Because I take a walk with you from time to time like this?"

"Yes. May I tell you what I'm thinking seriously about..."

Before I could finish, a girl's voice was heard, "Oh, Jane! Are you here?"

"Oh, Francie!" Jane stood up.

"How lucky to find you here," Francie said, out of breath.

"I want to talk to you about the meeting."

How unlucky for me! They began to talk as though I weren't there. As this was the country of ladies first, I

walked along behind them.

No opportunity turned up after that. I do not think I ever went walking with her again. Summer vacation came, and I was invited by Bob Mitchel to visit his home. He had promised to show me American rural life. His father was one of the wealthiest farmers in that district. The size of the farm itself was enough to surprise a young Japanese who had been brought up in a matchbox field. I stayed with him almost the whole summer. Bob was proud of me and took me around everywhere. On one occasion he arranged a meeting and let me have my first opportunity of making a speech in English. Even to this day the cordial welcome I received at this big farmhouse is a happy memory.

After leaving the Mitchel farm I went around to call on one of our alumni of Shirokane Gakuin who was studying at the University of Michigan. Nothing is more pleasant than meeting one's own countryman in a strange land. We enjoyed a boat ride on the lake and talked about our old school days. I insisted on his coming to see me at Indianapolis and said good-bye.

A surprise was waiting for me on the train going back.

I sat down next to a young American.

"Excuse me, are you a Japanese?" the young man asked. "Yes, I am."

"I expect to go to Japan next year! I've a special interest

in your country.'

He began talking about himself. He was a graduate of a theological college in Michigan and was now taking a postgraduate course which would last for two years. After that he planned to go to Japan for evangelical work. He was very pleased to know that I had studied at a mission school and asked about Christianity in Japan.

"Do you live over here?" he asked.

"Yes, I live in Indianapolis."

"Do you? I'm going to Indianapolis now."

"What luck! Ask me any question at all about Japan."
"You are staying in America to study, I suppose?"

"Yes, I'm studying at the University of Indiana."

"What a strange coincidence. My friend is also studying there and I'm going to visit her now."

"Really?"

"She is a coed. Maybe you know her. Miss Jane Collins."

"Indeed I do know her. She is the daughter of Philip Collins, the photographer."

"That's right."

Both of us were talking about the same family.

"Is he a relative of yours?"

"No, Mr. Collins is my father's best friend."

"What a surprise! I'm acquainted with Mr. Collins, too."

"Though we live some distance apart, both families exchange visits in the summertime. My father is visiting them now. I was there, too, but just came home to take care of my mother, who is ill."

"Yes, I expect to. Since our families are close, an understanding has been reached between Jane and me. . . ."

"Quite possible!"

"We've been engaged for two years. As soon as Jane finishes her education next year, we will go to Japan."

"Is that so?"

"As she is religious, she will be a great help in my missionary work. Since we became engaged she seems to have studied a lot about Japan. She knows many things about your country."

"You don't say."

"My father is also a missionary. When he was young he was the pastor of a church in Indianapolis. Mr. Collins was a member there."

"Well, I . . . well. . . ."

For the first time in my life I learned that fainting is not for women only. Even a young man in the best of health is likely to faint. When I said "quite possible" with assumed poise, I felt dizzy. When I heard the word "engaged," I believe I would have fallen if I hadn't already been sitting down.

After that I had nothing more to say but I listened to the missionary-to-be absent-mindedly. I realized why Miss Jane was so glad to listen to me talk about Japan.

# Chapter 16

#### **CAMARADERIE**

August 3, 1907

Came back from Michigan tired out from the journey and completely bewildered by the blow dealt

by Miss Jane's fiancé.

Zenzaburo Maruo, what a fool you are! You are especially conscious of the fair sex. Besides this weakness, your natural conceit is a stumbling block. Think of your purpose in being in America. You should have no hard feelings toward Miss Jane Collins. Let this be a good lesson to you.

August 8, 1907

Phone call from Miss Jane. Paid a visit to the Collinses. Jane calmly introduced her fiancé, James Palmer, who thanked me for my kind attentions to her during the past year. I hated to see them happy together. Fighting back bitter tears, I told them good-bye. Alone on the street looked up at the full moon and said to myself, "Zenzaburo Maruo! You are out of your mind! Last time you wept under the starry sky, but this time the stars are smiling at your folly."

This was the last entry about Miss Jane in my American diary. It seems I became sensible enough not to go for a walk again with a scheming Salvation Army girl.

In the land of convex beauty there were many women who combined charm with resourcefulness. If you took them at face value, you would learn a costly lesson, as I had done. For this practical lesson I had paid one year's tuition fee. Repenting my folly, I redoubled my efforts in my studies.

I lived in Indianapolis for six years. During the whole time I was with Dr. and Mrs. Peterson. In my list of benefactors their names are placed next to Dr. Matsuzaki's. Another unforgetable character was Professor George Miller. My stay in America was extended to study philosophy under this professor. I had a number of close friends, such as Bob Mitchel and Howard Jones. That is why the mere mention of America reminds me of Indianapolis, and Indianapolis

recalls my very pleasant college life.

Dr. Peterson's house was on Meridian Heights, which was a highly respectable residential neighborhood. Both the university president and Professor Miller had their homes there. My room commanded a view of the whole city, the impression of which survives in my mind's eye tinged with colors. The nearest street corner is as vivid as ever in my mind, although I cannot remember its name. I can see my own young image, marching shoulder to shoulder with Bob and Howard, singing loudly.

Bob Mitchel claimed to be the first boy who spoke to me, but Howard Jones protested that it was he. This showed me how much our friendship meant to them. There was another boy whose name was Fox. There are a lot of queer names in America. He was a friend I had made soon

after my arrival. He was also a country boy.

"You are a fox, aren't you?" I teased.
"What does Maruo mean?" he asked.

I had never studied my family name. Taking it syllable

by syllable I told him it meant a round tail.

"Then we are birds of a feather, aren't we? Let's be good friends." Saying this he slapped me on the back. After that he always called me "Foxtail."

It was not long after this that I came back from my visit to Bob Mitchel's home. One day on our way from school, Fox asked, "Are you peeved with me about something, Foxtail? Tell me frankly if I have hurt your feelings," he said seriously.

"Of course not! Why do you ask such a question?" "Then why did you visit Bob's home and not mine?"

"That was a promise of long standing. He wanted to show me a model American ranch."

"Mine is a ranch house, too. Bigger than Bob's, I believe."

"Oh?"

"And I was the first to invite you."

"Were you?"

"Let bygones be bygones. You've got to come to my home next time."

"O.K., I will."

"Sure?"

"Sure!"

I remember the trouble I got into keeping this promise. Fox had planned to take me home for Christmas vacation, but I could not leave with him because I had caught cold. His ranch was located ten miles inland from the nearest railway station-and it took a whole day on the train to reach that station. I had learned to my sorrow what it was to travel in the snow in Japan. I had half a mind not to go, but as he had already arranged my schedule at his home, he would certainly be angry with me if I didn't. I decided to go by myself. I have forgotten the name of the station now. I arrived on time in the afternoon. I had wired him, but he was not there in spite of his promise to meet me. I determined to walk, making light of the ten miles and comparing the distance with my past experience of walking even farther than that. But unfortunately the weather changed and it snowed hard. To be on the safe side I put up at a small hotel in a hilly town.

While I was having dinner in the dining room, two

Negro boys were standing by me as if on guard. Both of them were huge six-footers. Some white people and Negroes came in. After staring at me and whispering with the two boys, they went back out. Feeling insulted, I quickly finished my meal and went to my room. To my surprise the Negroes followed me. I locked my room door, but I knew they were keeping watch outside; I could hear their whispering.

There was nothing to do but go to bed but I felt uneasy. Through the windowpane I saw the Negro boys staring at me. When my eyes met theirs they went away, but soon a white man came to gaze at me, too. Going to the window I saw several white men and Negroes talking together. Meanwhile, I heard noises in the next room. People were

discussing something that I could not hear clearly.

Nearly scared to death, I thought of the unfortunate people who were kidnapped for a huge ransom. They had looked through the window and put watchmen outside the door. It was clear that I was to be their next victim. Next door some twenty of them were having a meeting. What were they going to do with me?

Opening the door I called to the boys, "Look here!"

"Yes, sir."

"What's going on in the next room?"

"Just a discussion!"

"What are they discussing?"

"You!"

"Me! What on earth are they going to do with me?"
"Can't tell you that or I'd get hell for it!"

"Impossible!"

"I'm watching so that no one can get to you!"

"Have you a telephone in this house?"

"No, we haven't."

"Is there a police station near by?"

"No!"

I closed the door and locked it again. Then I stretched myself out on the bed and tried to think. They wouldn't kill me, I decided, for they would know I had very little money. They might carry me deep into the mountain and demand a ransom.

No matter what it is, I have no choice but to throw myself on their mercy. It would be foolish to get hurt by disobeying their demands. At last I made up my mind.

Thinking how roughly they might handle me, I couldn't sleep. If worst came to the worst I might be killed. It was growing noisier next door. I tossed about on my bed. My watch indicated well past ten.

All at once there was a wild cheer from the next room. I stood up on the bed. The next moment I heard a loud knock at the door. While I was hesitating to open it, I heard a familiar voice.

"Foxtail, are you asleep?"

It was my friend Fox. I threw open the door. "I've never

been so glad to see anyone in my life!" I cried.

"Well, well, glad to see you've come. I just got your telegram this evening. I was wondering if you would come in this snowstorm."

He told me he had looked for me at every likely house along the road.

"Thanks a lot! I was feeling more dead than alive before

you came."

"I'm very, very sorry I was late. Your wire reached my home on time, but I have been out since morning."

"By the way, is this house all right?"

"What did you say?"

"This is a very strange place!" I told him everything that had happened.

"Your imagination has been working overtime! The

manager's son is working for us."
"Is that—is that right?" I stammered.

The hum of voices was still going on in the next room. Presently the manager came in and greeted Fox.

"What's been going on, Wiggins? My friend had been

frightened."

"I'm sorry."

"Were they curious about a Japanese?"

"They were betting on whether your friend is a Japanese or a Chinese. So when you came and asked if a Japanese were staying here, those who bet he was Japanese shouted 'Hurrah!'"

"I see! I was wondering what was the matter."

"The winners can have a drink on the losers' account tonight."

"Why were they keeping watch on me?" I asked, as I

really was upset by this action of theirs.

"Otherwise somebody might have come and asked your nationality."

"But why two watchmen?"

"One would have asked you the forbidden question, while two watched each other."

"I see."

"Your friend might like to come and have a drink with us."

The manager ushered Fox and me into the next room, which turned out to be the bar. Nearly thirty persons welcomed me with "Hurrah."

Now after the lapse of many years, even that much-adoabout-nothing evening remains a delightful recollection.

I spent New Year's Day with the Foxes that year. Their ranch house was even bigger than Bob's. It was one of those "could reach next village without treading on other people's land." Because it was the Christmas season, Fox's married sisters with their husbands and children were visiting. His parents were in splendid health and the whole family seemed to be prosperous and contented.

These warmhearted farm people gave me a taste of American life that I shall never forget. Their genuine friendliness and kindness touched me and helped to break through my reserve as nothing else had done. When Fox and I returned to Indianapolis, I felt myself more truly

a part of the American college scene.

# Chapter 17

#### TWO RESPECTED PROFESSORS

In the beginning I thought American students lacked fighting spirit. I felt something was missing in them. On the contrary, Japanese students in general are always prompted by prospects of success. Getting on in the world is the chief concern with them. A popular poem in Japan has it thus, "Let me lay my head on the lap of a beauty, but when I'm sober my hands are on the helm of the state."

Of course, Japanese students know that every one of them cannot become a prime minister, but it is their firm belief that university education puts them at the top of the social ladder. Hence their bravado. Every Japanese student is a would-be prime minister, while American students are easy-going, it seems to me, and on the whole not too interested in politics.

"Will you run for President some day, Bob?" I asked

during the early days of Mitchel's friendship.

"You will!"

"No, I won't."

"Why?"

"You can't be President by your own efforts. It's a position to which you are elected."

"Then what will you do after you graduate?"

"I'll probably be a farmer because my father is a farmer and needs me."

"But don't you think country life dull?"

"By no means! Country life has its charms. When I want

some city fun, I'll take a trip to the big city."

I asked Fox the same question, and his answer was the same. He didn't care whether he became a success or not.

"Then you Americans have no ambition at all."

"I wouldn't say that."

"You are young. You should have some definite goal in life."

"I want to marry a beautiful girl."

"And then what else?"

"God willing. . . ."

"What would you do?"

"I want to establish a big hospital in the town near our farm. I'm serious. I even intended to study medicine with this in view. But that was too big a dream so I thought it over and decided to be a farmer."

I thought they lacked spirit, but later I found out differently. When I was staying with Bob I had to change my opinion. While walking on the bank of a river, he explained that the irrigation of that district had been started by his grandfather in his declining years and had been completed only after his father's hair turned gray.

"Two generations were required to control this river.

It's a real beauty spot but a very treacherous river."

"So you are the third generation to maintain the

irrigation?"

"We are the fifth generation to till the soil here, I'm told. We are the oldest family in this part of the state. I consider it my duty to make improvements. You might like to remember after you return to Japan that your friend Bob Mitchel will continue to protect the bank of this river as long as he lives."

"That's a stirring thought, Bob, and one I shall enjoy

remembering."

I recalled Fox's hospital and thought that these boys were not lacking in spirit but were too wise to utilize their college education as a trump card in getting on in life. Under the influence of my American friends, I began to feel ashamed of my motive in coming to America. What a pity to try to become the best scholar in Japan only to beat my rival in love! I now thought of it as ignoble and vainglorious.

I made a lot more friends in America, many of them keeping in touch with me over the years. As for teachers, I also had many, but I will limit my account to my most beloved professors, Dr. Peterson and Dr. Miller, to whom I

owe so much.

I was under the guidance of Dr. Peterson for six years, both in the classroom and at home. He was my teacher, friend, confidant and hero. Among many things I learned from him, there is one suggestion that I can never forget. It was not long after our first meeting.

"Are you fond of literature, Maruo?" Dr. Peterson asked.

I answered in the affirmative.

"If you really are fond of literature, here is one point to consider, one I myself regret not thinking of now that it is too late to begin. Why don't you study the literature of your own country and become an expert in that field?"

"Being Japanese, it may be easier for me to study Japanese literature. But such scholars are plentiful in Japan."

"I don't mean for you to study the literature handed down to you but to develop your own. There are many so-called Shakespeareans in England, America and Germany. A host of scholars are devoting their whole lives to the study of Shakespeare throughout the world, and I am one of them. If I had given all these years entirely to my own literature, I might have made a sort of Shakespeare out of myself. Who knows?"

"Well. . . ."

"Better be a second or third Shakespeare than to be a Shakespearean scholar. You would be making a greater contribution to English literature."

"I see."

"Who is the Shakespeare of Japan?"

"It's Chikamatsu, sir."

"Then try to make a second Chikamatsu of yourself."

"I have no idea of making either a Shakespeare or a Chikamatsu of myself. So I will continue my study of

English literature."

"On the other hand, it's a big handicap to study literature in a language different from one's mother tongue. If I had learned Japanese as well as you have English and had studied Japanese literature could I have become an authority?"

"I'd hate to answer that question."

"Think over what I have said carefully before you make

up your mind."

All that Dr. Peterson had said was true, but the truth is not always easy to follow. I carried on my studies in English literature, but once in a while I stopped to think of his advice. If I had worked hard creating my own literature, maybe I could have accomplished something by this time. This advice Dr. Peterson gave me had discouraged me in my studies. Now I find myself a half-baked Shakespearean and an underdone Japanese scholar as well.

Dr. Peterson was called "Peterson the Henpecked," while Dr. Miller was known as "Miller the Tyrant." It is not true that American students never give their teachers nicknames. Dr. Miller was absent-minded, a characteristic of professors the world over. A lot of amusing anecdotes were told of him. When he was a newly-wed he kissed his wife, cigar in mouth, and gave her a bad burn. He was popular with the students but reputed to be incorrigible at home. He was one of those "street angels and house devils."

When Mrs. Miller was pregnant for the first time, shy young wife that she was, she took pains in revealing her condition to her husband. In this respect he was

thick-headed.

"I feel a little strange," she said, trying to break the news. No one could ever have overheard such a *tête-à-tête*, so this was bound to be just a story the boys made up.

"Why do you feel strange?"

"I don't know. I just feel different."

"See the doctor!"

"I feel as though I'm pregnant."

"Bah! That's none of my business!"

From then on she never took the matter of conception up with her husband but bore a dozen children just the same.

When I was under his guidance, Professor Miller was in the prime of life. Mrs. Miller was young, too. I am not sure whether or not they had twelve children, but their house

was like a nursery school.

One day before starting his lecture, Professor Miller felt inside his pocket and took out an apple. He put it on the desk in front of him and gazed at it wonderingly. On one side it had been given a big bite. The whole class burst out laughing. He must have felt in his pocket for something else but what he produced was a partly eaten apple. He laughed, too. That evening at dinner I told the story. Mrs. Peterson said that the apple must have been extorted from one of his children. She had an intense dislike for this tyrant.

"Dr. Miller is cruelly impulsive. He wouldn't stop at

grabbing a cake from a child and letting him cry."

"You don't mean to say Miller is that sort of man!"

"Yes, I do. Mrs. Miller is always telling me that she is more annoyed with the wilful big boy than the little ones. I know better than you do."

"Then you may be right."

Dr. Peterson conceded the point too easily, I thought. Professor Miller also took an active interest in my affairs. After I began to attend his lectures I took more interest in philosophy than in literature. Consequently I extended my stay in the university for another two years of post-graduate work under his guidance. But somehow it was my fate to suffer under my esteemed professor's instruction for the rest of my life. Just as Dr. Peterson's suggestion about my study in literature had a discouraging effect, so did Professor

Miller's unfavorable prediction about the future of Japan.

"I'm afraid Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War may lure her into dangerous dreams," Professor Miller used to say.

"But we have a proverb, 'Let the victor tighten the laces

of his helmet," I would say.

"But Japan is making her helmet bigger. Unless she discards the conscription system at this time she will be overwhelmed by militarism. 'He who lives by the sword will die by the sword.' Japan should study the history of the world. Right now she is sowing the seeds for her own destruction."

I do not remember whether it was at this time or another that he explained his belief by drawing a triangle, showing the base line as the people and the vertical angle,

the emperor.

"The wide base line gives the sense of stability when it is an obtuse triangle. While the influence rests with the people, the nation is safe but, as the power of the emperor increases, the angle becomes more acute and the triangle loses its equilibrium. You understand?"

"Yes, I see."

"Japan's triangle is pretty acute. The base line is creaking under pressure. The people are walking, groaning under the emperor, the bureaucrats and the soldiers. One false step and Japan will tumble down."

Professor Miller repeatedly warned me against Japanese militarism. It was always about a triangle and simple reasoning. Yet I was far from being convinced, pleading national

defense was necessary to some extent.

Japan has followed the course Professor Miller predicted. However farsighted he was, he could not foresee the fate of German militarism that caused World War I. He predicted that Germany would dominate the world by her science. His prophecy about the fall of Japan might possibly have been a lucky guess. Or an unlucky one, depending upon which way you look at it.

# Chapter 18

### FRESH FROM AMERICA

I left the summer I was twenty-four and returned home the summer I was thirty. That made six full years in America. During that period I had never been homesick and all the time had been in good health, enjoying the privilege of studying abroad. Since the climate was agreeable and the culture of the country at a high level, life was pleasant. I often thought of settling down for good because it was the land of beautiful ladies.

However, once the idea of going home was kindled in my heart, it was beyond my power to control it. I gave up my planned trip to Europe, thinking I would go in my own good time some day. Now I look back upon that decision with deep regret. During the first ten years after my return from America I could by no means afford to go on a sightseeing tour of Europe. When I had enough money saved to go, I was too busy to leave my job. There was nothing else to do but to work until I reached retirement age and then go to see Europe. But World War II upset my plans. Defeat, purge and inflation came all at once and now I find myself in my home town supported by a nephew. My trip to Europe is still a dream. I will not dwell on any matters that have nothing to do with my recollections.

I found my parents and brothers in good health. Overjoyed at seeing me again, they welcomed me with open arms. Early the next morning I hurried to Tsunejiro's hill-

side home.

"Welcome home, Zenzaburo!" he said almost formally, trying to hide his emotion at seeing me after six years.

"Glad to see you, Tsunejiro," I cried throwing my arms

around him. "You are looking fine."

"I've missed you so much, Zen!" It was easy to see that he was close to tears.

"I've so many things to tell I don't know where to start,"

I said, swallowing the lump in my throat.

This lazy brother of mine was the best correspondent I had during my stay in America. Thinking how much he must have exerted himself to write me in small characters instead of his usual inch-square ones, I used to read his letters over and over.

"I say, Zen, Sagara has become a captain."

"Has he?"

"He's in Tokyo."

"Is he?"

"He failed to enter the Staff College year after year, until at last he became ineligible."

"Oh! Did he?"

"But he may be promoted to major soon."

"Is that so?"

"Why do you answer in monosyllables when I am speaking seriously? You puzzle me."

"I'm sorry. I'm absent-minded, I guess. Haven't got over

my seasickness yet, perhaps."

Trying to avoid any talk about Sagara, I was relieved when Joko and the eldest son appeared. I had left Tsuneichi one year old, and now he was already a schoolboy. Some of the American toys I brought him seemed a little too young for him. Tsunejiro bragged about his production feat of three boys and one girl during my absence. I had to give him credit, but of course some credit was due to the village belle he had married.

As soon as his wife left the room, Tsunejiro went right

back to the subject of Maruo vs. Sagara.

"Sagara is sure to become a major. You have

accomplished your goal, haven't you?"

"I worked hard, majoring in English literature. I can give lectures on the subject in fluent English. I can also lecture on philosophy. Before leaving Tokyo I stopped at Shirokane and was asked to become a professor in the college department this coming fall."

I tried to veer away from the issue by deluging him

with words.

"Did you get a degree?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm a Ph.D."

"What's that in Japan?"

"It's Tetsugaku-Hakushi. It took me three years to get it."

"Splendid!"

"Of course, the first degree was my B.A."

"What's that?"

"Bachelor of Arts. Bungakushi. And then I studied a year for my M.A. Just for fun I told you about the highest degree first."

"Yes, Dr. Maruo," Tsunejiro cried. "Congratulations!"

I felt ashamed of my motive in going to America. Having lived in a country where people think less of revenge, I was taught to love my enemies. The grudge that once obsessed me had almost disappeared by this time. Although I could not remember it without some annoyance, I found life too precious a privilege to be ruled by vengeance. I had my own work to do.

"My eyes have been opened, Tsunejiro!"

"What do you mean?"

"Sagara Masanobu may be promoted to general as far as I'm concerned."

"You can be proud to say that, for you are a Ph.D at thirty. Nobody knows how successful you may become."

"I don't mean it that way. I mean, it doesn't matter to me at all."

"Then why did you go to America?"

"No doubt it was to triumph over Sagara. While I was there, however, I was given a lesson by my friends. Americans do not make personal revenge a motive for self-improvement. After acquiring a Bachelor of Arts degree many graduates continue with postgraduate work in every field. Others work in their family business or on farms and a great number are absorbed in large industries. I can't help admiring their wholesome attitude."

"Please don't! Then your graduation from the university

and all your efforts will be wasted."

"I don't think so. In Japan, as soon as our young men graduate from a university they go to Tokyo. A graduate of the agricultural department, without taking care of his own farm, becomes a technician of the government agricultural laboratory or a teacher."

"Don't worry about other people! Have you forgotten

that you wept bitter tears in this very room?"

"I was distressed at that time, but I've seen something of life since then. Mitsuko and I weren't meant for each other."

"If you can be philosophical about it, you may be all right now. But don't you feel discouraged?"

"I'm not interested in either Mitsuko or Sagara any

longer."

'Isn't that because you have a sweetheart in America?" Tsunejiro asked, interpreting my words in his own way. He thought that getting on in the world was the sole ambition of university graduates. He plainly showed his disappointment, saying that was why we should hate the Yaso. I didn't answer him as I didn't want to offend him.

Calling on all of my relatives, I naturally dropped in on the Dai Marus. Father and Uncle Daisuke had been caught up in an embarrassing relationship, for the latter failed in his textile business and incurred some loss at Father's bank. Father made good the losses and retired just as he reached

sixty.

"I'm truly sorry about the trouble I caused your Dad," Uncle Daisuke said, scratching his bald head. I found

Father aged, but Uncle Daisuke looked still older.

Aunt Tami told me about Haruyo and Mitsuko. "Haruyo has only one child, but Mitsuko is the mother of three. She is in Tokyo. Do go and see her the next time you're there."

"Yes, Aunty."

"Whenever she comes home she talks about you."

"She was fresh from girls' high when I left. What a surprise to learn that she is already the mother of three children."

"How fast time flies! Sagara is probably a major by now. Mitsuko is jittery about his slow promotion. Yoshida is forging ahead rapidly. He is now the assistant manager of the Osaka branch office."

"Yoichi is also in Kansai, I hear."

"Yes, he graduated last year and works with Haruyo's husband's company."

Kosuke never referred to Sagara. Unlike Tsunejiro, he

was tactful. He, too, was the father of three children.

"What do you think about this, Kosuke?" I asked, showing him a note I was about to mail Tsunejiro.

"What is it?"

"Read the comic verse at the end."

"Let me see.

Oh me, oh my! Six years have gone by And there's not a shred Of hair on your head.

"It's true," he chuckled.

"I just mean to tease him. You're not so bad, but he is really bald-headed."

"You better not mail it. He is quite sensitive about it."

"Why did he get so bald?" I asked.

"I don't know. I'm getting bald, too. My forehead is all

right, but the top of my head is pretty bad. How about you, Zen?"

"I'm not so old yet!"

"It's hereditary with us to begin losing our hair while young. Dad had practically dispensed with barbers by the time he was fifty."

"I was surprised to find Uncle Daisuke bald, too, the

other day."

"I say don't mail this note. And when you have a drink with Tsunejiro, be careful."

"Why should I?"

"His bald head really bothers him. Ordinarily it's all right, but when he takes a drop too much he becomes envious of others who have their hair. The other day he did something terrible. He invited the family doctor for dinner. While drinking with his guest, all of a sudden he took out a pair of scissors and clipped all the hair off the doctor's head."

I couldn't help laughing. At the same time I was

ashamed of Tsunejiro's action.

"It made Joko cry, I heard."

"But wasn't the doctor foolish to let him do it! Why didn't he resist?"

"He was drunk and fast asleep. Being a guest, he was as trusting as a child."

"I'm surprised at Tsunejiro."

"He's a chronic offender. There have been other victims, so don't fall asleep when you drink at his house."

"I won't forget it. Thanks for the tip."

# Chapter 19

#### **AFTERMATH**

After spending a month or so at home I went back to Tokyo and settled down in a house rented for me by Yukichi. He had also engaged an old woman as my house-keeper. Times were not so pressing as nowadays, and such matters were easily arranged. In six years Yukichi had boosted his business remarkably. He had bought his shop and had remodeled it. True to his shingle, "Exclusive Outfitter to Shirokane Gakuin," he did the tailoring of almost all the uniforms for the school. His business prospered with the growth of Shirokane Gakuin. I was now on the faculty of the same school to which fifteen years ago I had applied for entrance, following timidly behind Yukichi. I was full of recollections and gratitude.

Not long after school had begun I went out shopping on the Ginza. The word *Gin-bura* (loitering about Ginza) had not yet been coined, and because prices there were supposed to be 20 to 30 percent higher than other shopping areas, the place was kept at a respectful distance by students.

It was not so crowded as it is now.

Getting off the street car at Shimbashi, I headed toward a hosiery where I intended to make some purchases. While walking down a side street I casually looked into a lacquerware shop and saw a young woman from the back. The moment she turned toward me I knew it was Mitsuko. I felt my heart begin to pound but walked on with apparent unconcern.

"Zen-san!" Mitsuko cried, running after me. It was our

first meeting since she wore "wild cherry blossoms glowing in the morning sun." After inquiring about each other's health, she said appealingly that her husband was with her and took me inside the shop. I met Masanobu Sagara for the first time.

After the formal "glad to meet you," he kept nodding as Mitsuko explained our family relationship. He seemed to be an unassuming, soldierly fellow. His headquarters being the Third Regiment at Azabu, he lived at 1-Kasumicho and invited me to call on him some day. I still remember his address because of its being number 1.

Even though I now felt myself to be a man of the world, I still didn't want to visit the Sagaras. But it lifted my spirits to think that Mitsuko ran after me. A nagging doubt in my mind was now dispelled. I must be careful, however, as she is a flirt. I may be tripped up again at any moment.

At school I found myself pretty busy, having been assigned fifteen hours a week. As I was eager for my lectures

to be as good as Dr. Peterson's, I worked very hard.

One day that fall it so happened that I stopped at the dormitory on some business. I knocked on the door of the room I had lived in as a schoolboy. The boarding students greeted me deferentially.

"Don't bother, boys. I'm on business. I lived here three or four years. I simply wanted to see my old room again."

"This was your desk, sir." One of the boys pointed to the big desk, six feet square.

I sat down on at my old desk. At the most conspicuous

place on it I found these words in red: "Like a tiger."

It had slipped my mind, but it was my own carving. I remembered having chosen the most prominent place so that I might be spurred constantly by the motto.

"We all know that you worked like a tiger here at this

desk, sir."

"I don't quite remember."

"The last boy who used this desk told me that on leaving.

As I am determined to follow your example, I retouched it with red."

"Good boy."

I was pleased to know that my motto inspired other students, but when I thought of my motive I could not help feeling ashamed.

"Good-bye, fellows. Don't forget to work like a tiger," I said. I left the room laughing, but walking down the stairs

I was suddenly struck with a longing for Mitsuko.

The New Year had come. By the calendar I was thirtyone years of age. It is taught in the Bible that it is not good for man to live alone. This idea is naturally very popular with the Japanese people. When one finds a bachelor in a group, one seems to feel there is something wrong. I was urged by my relatives, colleagues and friends to get married. I had never made up my mind to remain single from the first. I was a normal young man but, since returning from America, I was not satisfied with any of the pictures of prospective brides. I wondered why there were so many flat-faced women in my country. Betrayed by my first love in Japan, I may have become a woman hater. One American girl I knew flirted with me simply to get information about things Japanese. In my younger days the middle-school principal who banished me used to teach us that the existence of one bad element would risk the honor of the whole school. Unwittingly, I was applying this formula in picking out a girl for my wife. I couldn't take just anyone who came along.

I continued to turn down would-be brides recommended by my elders. I was overwhelmed with gratitude when Dr. Matsuzaki suggested being a go-between, but I could do nothing. Some kind friends asked me what sort of bride I wished to get. The satire was not lost on me. The number of girls I refused exceeded twenty in a few years. After Father, who had been the most annoying advocate of marriage, died, Mother and my brothers became disgusted and stopped bothering me. In five or six years' time everyone was resigned to my life-long bachelorhood. No acquaintance was ever forgetful enough to recommend a bride. Captain Masanobu Sagara had been transferred to another city. As I didn't remember where he was, Mitsuko must have faded from my mind. But chance plays tricks sometimes. One day Dr. Matsuzaki asked me, "How do you like the theater, Maruo?

"Would you care to go to Teigeki with me this evening? I've two tickets a friend of mine gave me."

"Of course I'll be glad to go with you. Do you like

Kabuki too?"

"Yes, I do. Although I can't appreciate the fine points of acting, the play will carry us back hundreds of years and will tell us the mode of life of our ancestors."

"I am quite interested, as my birthplace is one of those castle towns of the feudal age. They still segregate the nobility from the tradesmen there."

"Samurai drama is really amusing!"

"Don't you wish you had been born in feudal days?"

I measured his corn by my own bushel, for I had belonged to the Shonai clan, while the director belonged to the Aizu clan. Both our ancestors were in the same boat at the time of the Meiji Restoration. On one occasion when I talked about my family history, he told me of his, too. His forefathers were chief retainers in the Aizu clan and if he had been a year older he might have joined in Byakkotai,\* and committed harakiri.

The plays at Teigeki were *Endo Morito* and two others which I cannot remember now. The tragic love story of Morito and Kesa is one everybody knows but in the past I had never compared it with my own unfortunate love affair. As soon as I saw the title of the play, I recalled the folly

<sup>\*</sup>Note: The Byakkotai—or White Tiger Corps—was a group composed of sons of samurai aged fifteen to seventeen fighting on the Shogun's side at the time of the Meiji Restoration. They committed mass harakiri on the fall of Wakamatsu Castle, Aizu clan.

of my younger days, because it was a typical love story of cousins.

The first scene was Hashi Kuyo, in which a dedication of the new bridge was to be made. Endo Musha Morito, impersonated by Kichiemon as the warrior presiding over the ceremony, looked young and gallant on his horse, a spear in his hand. His beautiful cousin Kesa appeared last of all, with two ladies-in-waiting, holding a sun-shade in one hand. Morito and Kesa came face to face. I watched them with breathless interest. Kesa with a slight bow went on toward the *hanamichi* (flower way, a passage leading to the stage through the left section of the theater). Morito gazed after her entranced. Kesa disappeared behind the curtain at the end of the passage, and Morito was left still, straining his eyes and standing on tiptoe to see her disappear.

The next scene was Kesa's mother's house. Morito visited his aunt and threatened to kill her for her cruelty in having Kesa marry Wataru in spite of knowing his lifelong love for his cousin. To me the aunt on the stage was my Aunt Tami at Shinmachi. I was absorbed by Kichiemon's eloquence. In despair, Kesa's mother suggested a compromise.

The third scene was the house of Watanabe Wataru. Wataru, played by Kikugoro, and Kesa, by Kikujiro, were having a drink. As Kesa had determined to be killed by Morito, she meant to share a last drink with her husband. To save her mother's life, Kesa had promised Morito to be his wife, after the latter killed Wataru, her husband. To facilitate Morito's killing of her husband, she had promised to have Wataru sleep by himself in a specified room. But actually Kesa placed herself there instead of her husband, for whose life and that of her mother she fell victim to Morito's sword.

The stage revolved and the next scene was the stone steps leading to a Buddhist temple. Morito appeared out of the darkness carrying a bundle wrapped up in white cloth. When he was coming down the steps the moon broke through the clouds. Morito, believing he had cut off the head of Wataru, but deciding to make doubly sure, opened the bundle. Finding it was his beloved Kesa, he staggered, pressed the head to his breast and fell down the steps. Then the curtain fell.

This tragic loss of his sweetheart made Morito give up all his worldly desires as a samurai and join the priesthood. Later, he became the renowned priest known as Saint Mongaku. There was a scene depicting his asceticism, showing him sitting under the great waterfall of Nachi.

When this play was over, we went to the dining hall. "You were crying, Maruol" said Dr. Matsuzaki.

"Yes, sir, out of sympathy with Morito for his lost love." "Your tears are still falling. How sentimental you are!" I tried to laugh, hiding my face in my hands but it was no good. A lovelorn man's fate is sad. Occasionally, when he

is quite unaware of it, he is called upon to pay a tax of this sort.

# Chapter 20

### AROMA OF A CIGAR

Drinking and smoking are injurious to one's health. I learned this in primary school textbooks, but I both smoke and drink. My life in America made a cigar addict of me. To me it did little or no injury as far as my health was concerned, but it caused me to switch from the professor's position to that of a businessman.

It seemed to me that I was destined to commit follies periodically. However, this time it was not solely my own; I was forced to share it with a certain woman. Life is full of follies. Although we try to be sensible, the indiscretions of others involve us and entangle us in spite of ourselves. It

is like a fire that breaks out in a neighbor's house.

This particular madness was ignited by a cigar. Shirokane Gakuin was raised to the status of a university. The movement for the promotion had been going on ever since I came back from America, and now it was an accomplished fact. Thanks to Dr. Matsuzaki's recommendation, I was appointed director of the college preparatory course, although I thought it a little too heavy a burden for me. As far as scholastic ability was concerned, I never thought myself incompetent, but there were a number of other suitable professors with greater seniority. Since Shirokane Gakuin was a mission school, the director and the missionary faculty were required to be Christians. Lecturers who came from outside were excepted, but I was not a Christian. Because I was a bachelor, Î was looked upon as a kind of screwball. In Japan the phrase "to be weighty among one's colleagues" is very good, but in the eyes of associates I was a young person of light weight. Besides, my smoking habit was decidedly questionable, as Shirokane Gakuin belonged to a sect that was very particular about drinking and smoking.

In short, my position was a house built on sand. Unless I dug deep by mental training, it could not stand against a

heavy wind.

"In the meantime," Dr. Matsuzaki told me, "you should be baptized. You understand Christianity, I am sure." Maybe he felt somewhat uneasy about me, but I paid no attention to his advice. I was conceited enough to think that my

position was secure because of my ability.

The third year after the school acquired university status I employed one of our junior graduates, Otoji Sato, as an English teacher in the preparatory course. He came from the same province as I and was a brother of one of my middle school classmates. However, due to a five-year difference in ages I did not see him in Japan. I knew him

only in America, where he worked to put himself through college. When he returned home and couldn't find work,

I gave him the preparatory teaching job.

Sato's elder brother, a graduate of the Agricultural College at Sapporo, died while he was teaching in a country agricultural high school. Soon after his death Sato came home from America and married his brother's widow. Such a practice is rather common in Japan to keep families intact in the country areas.

Sato was gentle and sincere, a typical northeastern man. In America he had followed the principle of studying and working during alternate years, and it had taken him twice as long to graduate from a university there. Moreover, he stayed until he was thirty to avoid conscription. About a year had gone by since he married his second-hand wife, but he was still doing his best to please her, just as a bridegroom would. She was called Yoshie and was a rather glamorous-looking woman, though a bit too made-up all the time. Sato may have volunteered to marry his brother's widow.

Being fellow provincials, Sato and I had much in common. We frequently exchanged calls but, being a bachelor, I was the one who did the most of the visiting. Yukichi had found a house to rent at my request not far from mine. Since Sato had done dining-room work at his college in America, he was active in his home. He took it upon himself to make tea and coffee.

"My husband is very handy. He's a better cook than I," said his wife. I once read in a senryu (a satirical short poem) that an enamored husband is made into a drudge by his

wife. Sato was the man.

"You are working a little too hard, aren't you? The kitchen isn't the place for a husband!" I said to him one time. But he said, "Why not? I can cook better food with the same ingredients." He confessed he took all the Western-style cooking upon himself.

Whenever I went to see them Mrs. Sato came out and

asked me, "Mr. Maruo, will you please smoke a cigar for me."

She said she liked the aroma of a cigar. This was the beginning of more trouble for me.

"Doesn't your husband smoke at all?" I asked casually.

"This man is like a frog," she replied in a harsh voice.

"That's too severe, isn't it?"

"I could never afford to smoke while I was in America," Sato said, "Now it's all the better for me. My wife can allow me less pocket money."

A rather naive statement of the virtue of non-smoking, I thought! Thrift seemed to be the greater part of its virtue.

"Then you turn over all the money you earn to your

wife?"

"Yes. Every good husband in America does the same."

"In my house I am the queen. It was a condition agreed upon before I married him," his wife protested quickly.

"But you shouldn't tease your husband like that."

"I reward him with love!" she said flippantly.

"Give him as much freedom as you can. Allow him all the pocket money you save by his not smoking and not drinking!"

"He doesn't need much. He's thrifty with his pocket

money."

"With little gunpowder one can't be active."

By active, I meant with more money he could be more active in his work, but his wife interpreted it the wrong way.

"If you were active with other women I would kill you,

Otojiro!"

"I would be happy to be killed by you, honey!"

It obviously was a "wife-basis" home. Sato was not only completely wrapped up in his wife but could not get over the idea that she had been his senior sister-in-law. His wife was very conceited, and because she was childless she could have married into a better family if she so wished.

She was an expert on the koto (a kind of harp). Sato

proudly told all his friends that she was such a good koto player she could make a living by teaching it if she wanted to. His instrument is the shakuhachi (bamboo flute). When Sato played the shakuhachi, with his cheeks puffed out, it was quite a spectacle. On the other hand, his wife's posture at koto was elegance itself.

Her voice, however, was hard and jarring to the ear,

quite a contrast to her beautiful appearance.

Even her natural speaking voice was harsh and disillusioning. As to Sato's *shakuhachi* blowing, he deserved an A for effort, tooting away with a red face and beads of sweat on his brow.

On my first visit I praised their performance, which to my regret encouraged them to entertain me with a duet

every time I called on them.

One evening I said banteringly, "Isn't this torture by koto?" In one kabuki scene a koto is used as an instrument of torture. A clever judge commands Akoya, a beautiful geisha girl, to play on the koto to determine whether or not she is truthful in denying any knowledge of her lover's whereabouts.

"Do I look like Akoya?" Sato's wife exclaimed, overjoyed

and unaware of my sarcasm.

From Akoya the conversation switched to theatrical shows. As a music lover, Mrs. Sato naturally enjoyed plays. In the country, however, there were no opportunities to see dramas by great actors, and she had seen only road companies.

"I have never seen any really great actors' performances.

I have been longing to do so. Will you take me to the

theater?"

"That's an easy request to fill."

"When will it be?"
"Any time you like."

"I've never seen a Japanese play in my life. Please do take us!" Sato added enthusiastically.

Since I had cried over Endo Morito's fate, I had had

many chances to visit the theater. Naturally, Japanese classical drama appealed to me more deeply than

Shakespearean plays.

One of the alumni of Shirokane was in charge of the amusement column of a big newspaper, and through him I became friendly with a number of actors. Two or three theater tickets were sent to me every month from individual

actor's supporters' associations.

A few days later I took Sato and his wife to the Kabukiza. Whether it was on that occasion or later I do not remember, but Mrs. Sato wanted to see an actor's dressing room. Being a flirt, she was probably interested in the actors themselves. At her persistent request, I decided to take her backstage. When we were passing through the wings, we met a scene shifter with part of a huge set on a cart. It was dark and our steps were unsteady.

"Look out!" With a cry she grabbed my hand. The cart

passed on, but she would not let go.

Good heavens! What sort of a woman is this! I asked myself. Holding hands is a fairly innocent gesture, but with this forward housewife it was more than coquettish.

# Chapter 21

### THE FLIRT

As we belonged to the same faculty, we were naturally thrown together a good deal. Sato usually invited me to his house, and I was willing to accept it by way of relieving my prosaic life with an old chorewoman.

"Smoke a cigar for me, Mr. Maruo," Madame Yoshie would say in a coaxing tone. She was so charmed with the

aroma of cigars that, when I went home, she would burn my cigar butt to enjoy its scent, I was told.

One evening my bachelorhood happened to be discussed.

I was on the sunny side of forty then.

"I can imagine the reason you stay single," said Sato.

"How so?"

"Dr. Maruo was disappointed in love. To discover the woman who tripped him up I'm now referring to the Municipal Office of Tsuruoka."

I laughed it off, but I thought I should be on my guard. Being a fellow-townsman, he might find out something.

"To reject such a fine man as Mr. Maruo the woman must have been insane!" Madame Yoshie exclaimed.

"Now wait just a minute," I demurred.

"The woman must be crying her eyes out by now," she went on.

"Give me some help, Sato," I said lightly.

"As you were my husband's brother's classmate, she must have been about my age. Who could she be? Probably a great beauty!" This inquisitiveness was beyond the bounds of ordinary courtesy.

"There is no such woman in existence. Ever since I left

middle school I've lived in Tokyo."

"Then she was a Tokyo woman!" Madame Yoshie continued her probing.

"No! I went to America as soon as I graduated."

"She must be an American, then!" she said triumphantly,

clapping her hands.

"Yes, very likely. Dr. Maruo must have had a lot of American girl friends! Even I was charmed with every girl I met over there," said Sato.

"Don't be foolish!" chided his wife.

"But I agree," I said cheerfully. "American women are beautiful. It is a land of beauty, I'd say." I explained my theory of convex beauty. The conceited Madame Yoshie adapted my theory to herself.

"That is to say, any woman who looks like a Western woman may be called a beauty, mayn't she?"

"Quite right, Mrs. Sato. You would never lose in

comparison, even in America."

"How glad I am to hear it!"

"Well, anyway, you belong to the beauty group."

"You mean in America or in Japan?"

"In Japan, anyway."

"I don't like that anyway." "Then, on the whole."

"On the whole is no good either."

"Absolutely? In your husband's eye, eh, Sato?" I teased. "Tell me what's wrong with me?" She posed as though asking, "Find fault if you can!"

The thought struck me that everybody is blind to his

own faults.

"Well..."

"Tell me frankly!"

"Please do, for our guidance," Sato joined, looking serious.

"Don't embarrass me. I would risk losing your friendship!"

"Don't mind, it's only a joke!"

"Then I'll say it!" "Go on please!"

"Your voice is a flaw in a precious stone."

"Dear me!"

"I am sorry, but you made me say it."

"You are right. I admit it," she said, and would not utter another word.

"But a mute woman can be a beauty," Sato protested. He

was a regular fool about his wife.

Inadvertently, I was successful in shutting up her koto. It had hit her in a weak spot. After that, even when I asked her to play on the koto, she would say, "No, I'm no good!"

The experience in the Kabuki Theater showed me what

she really meant. Taking advantage of the darkness, she purposely clung to my hand and would not let it go for some time. Saying she liked the aroma of a cigar was a hint that she liked the man who smoked the cigar.

One evening when Sato went into the kitchen to make

his coffee he was so proud of, we were left alone.

"Let me have a smoke," she said, taking the cigar out of

my hand and giving it one or two puffs.

"This is an indirect kiss, wouldn't you say?" she boldly exclaimed. All the time, she was looking for an opportunity for a direct one. When I spilled coffee on the table, she gripped my hand with one hand while wiping with the other, "Never mind! never mind!"

When I said goodnight she handed me my hat and tried to hold my hands without Sato's seeing us. She was an awful flirt, as is often the case with vain women. Especially so, because she was in a position to ignore her husband. Fully aware of these facts, I should have been more careful, but was foolish enough to find it rather pleasing to have a pretty woman making a play for me.

When the summer vacation came, we decided to go home together. I made it a point to go home every summer. Father had been dead for some time, but Mother and my

brothers were in the best of health.

About six miles from Tsuruoka, my home town, there was a hot spring resort near the ocean called Hamanoyu, where we could enjoy bathing at the beach. We decided to go there. Sato and his wife reserved rooms in a hotel.

I intended to prepare my fall lectures. However, having my friends in the next room for pleasure only, I could not manage my work well. So I was to leave after a week's stay. Sato's wife, as usual, approached me under the pretext of asking me to smoke.

"The hotel people seem to take me for your wife," she

said coquettishly.

Sato was only too pleased to know his wife was happy: He trusted me completely, which was not too flattering. Nevertheless, his wife's actions became more and more

conspicuous.

Once she stopped me in a narrow hall. She must have been waiting for me to come down from upstairs. She clung to me, saying, "Just kiss me! Kiss me!"

She tried to make me kiss her. Freeing myself from her grip, I ran to Sato. She did not show up for some time.

"What the devil is my wife doing?" he fumed.

"How would I know?" I answered with an innocent air. His wife came back in the evening. She glared at me now and then, her face flushed.

"Do you have a headache, dear?" Sato asked.

"I'm tired of living. I was on the beach, thinking of throwing myself into the ocean."

"What do you mean!"

"How dull life is!" she sighed.

One day we were playing pingpong in the amusement hall. I had beaten Sato several times in succession. Then she stood up and challenged me, saying she would take revenge for her husband.

"Good! Let's play for ice cream."

"I don't care for ice cream. I'm sure to win!"

"Then what shall we play for?" I asked.

She came close to me and whispered, "You must comply with whatever request I may make!"

The game ended in my complete defeat. She was said to

have been a champion player in her school days. "What did you bet?" asked Sato.

"Something nice!" his wife replied.

"Ice cream and watermelon." I said, and ordered the

maid to bring them in.

The Bon Festival (Japanese Parentalia in July) having come, Sato and his wife were to go home to pay homage to their ancestral graves. However, his wife stayed in bed that morning saying she had a headache and Sato went home alone. Since his house was in a village located about four miles from town, he had to stay overnight.

As our rooms were adjoining, I took my meals with the Satos. Now with Sato gone and Madame Yoshie lying in bed, I was for the first time left alone. I missed Yoshie, not Sato, however. To kill time I went down to take a bath. We had engaged a family bathroom and used to bathe together. Once Sato called my attention to his wife's white skin and said, "How white she is! White people are no whiter."

While I was enjoying my bath alone, the door opened

and Madame Yoshie appeared with a towel in her hand. "How is your headache?" I asked, surprised at her boldness.

"Just pretending," she answered, beaming at me. Yoshiesan slipped off her yukata (bath kimono) and got into the large sunken bath. I started to get out.

"The moment I get in you get out. Are you afraid?" she

said mockingly.

"No, no. I have soaked long enough already."

"Don't lie. I came right away because I heard you leave your room."

"But Yoshie-san, please excuse me."

"Maruo-san, do you hate me so much?" Madame Yoshie

suddenly burst into passionate weeping.

In my confusion I got out of the bath and locked the door lest someone hear her. The door was already shut. Now, how was a lock going to keep out the noise of her crying? I thought belatedly. There was another way to shut her up, and I must admit I took it. The guilty feeling in my mind probably only enhanced the enjoyment of this latest folly. I knew the old saying about the delight of forbidden fruit. Well, this luscious peach not only seemed to be unforbidden, but it had dropped right in my lap. I hadn't even had to pluck it.

# Chapter 22

#### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

We fell into the same routine after we returned to Tokyo. Sato found some excuse or other to invite me to visit them. Madame Yoshie had grown even bolder since the interlude at Hamanoyu hot spring. I found it amusing to try to elude her. It was almost as though I were taking revenge on all women for the way Mitsuko and Jane Collins had treated me.

One Sunday I met Madame Yoshie in front of Maruzen. She may have been waiting for me there, knowing the time of my customary visit to the bookstore.

"What good luck to run into you. Will you have tea

with me somewhere near here?" she said right away.

"This is just the place here," I said firmly. I took her to the tearoom in Maruzen's basement floor, where I could talk to her without feeling guilty. She seemed nervous.

"Mr. Maruo, will you have a date with me somewhere

else? I want to have a long talk with you."

"That's one thing I can't do. We couldn't explain that to your husband, could we?"

"Don't worry about Sato. I'll leave him at home to take

care of the housekeeping."

Just at that moment Professor Yoneyama, a colleague at Shirokane, happened to come in. Yoneyama was also a bookworm, and I saw him at Maruzen often. As luck would have it, he was one of those who had tried in vain to persuade me to get married, and had been more than a little annoyed at my refusal.

"So this is Mrs. Sato, the wife of your protegé, so to speak," he said, when I introduced him. I felt a guilty flush creeping over my face. Madame Yoshie suddenly seemed to find herself in an awkward position. Without finishing her tea, she made a somewhat unintelligible apology, gave a formal bow and left.

Besides being a director of the preparatory course, I was concurrently teaching English and English literature in the college department. I was naturally pretty well occupied preparing my lectures. I could not accept every invitation Sato gave. When my visits had become less frequent, Madame Yoshie began to call on me. Because of her heavy make-up, her visits attracted quite a bit of attention. I wouldn't have minded if she had come with her husband, but she always made it a point to come alone.

"Take me home, please, Mr. Maruo," she would say coaxingly. If I went with her, she would hold my hand on

the way.

One day when she was in my house Professor Yoneyama dropped in unexpectedly. This time Madame Yoshie didn't hurry away as she had at Maruzen. Later, I begged her to keep away from my home to avoid gossip.

"If I were a married man, it might be all right, but I'm a bachelor. Please don't come to see me by yourself any

more."

"Isn't it good for you?"

"We should be afraid of what people will say. What will Manno think!"

"Has Manno said anything?"
"She hasn't said anything yet."

"That plump woman is too stupid to suspect us."

"If you come to see me again, bring your husband."
"If we come together, our house will be robbed."

"Then I'll call on you."

"You seldom come over nowadays."

My maid was quite a fat woman and not so old. As she

reminded us of Manno (a character in Kabuki play) Madame Yoshie called her Manno behind her back.

"Master does Manno mean a pig in English?" the maid

asked me.

"Well, I don't know."

"It's a pity for poor uneducated people to be made fun of."

I was at a loss as to what to say to that. She began to harbor ill feelings against Madame Yoshie. "You must be careful of that bogle of white powder, Master," she used to warn me.

Late that fall there was quite a lot of gossip about me. If I had been a man of irreproachable character and a Christian of good faith, I could have lived it down but to my regret, I was no Christian and a selfish bachelor. Besides, I drank and smoked. I had all sorts of disadvantages. Because of my smoking, I once had an argument with the missionaries and hurt their feelings. Winds blew from all sides, and my house on the sand began to give way.

Director Matsuzaki sent for me. I went to see him in the

evening.

"Maruo, what sort of trouble are you in? Tell me all about it," said the director, with his arms folded. Nothing could have been more heartbreaking to me than causing anxiety to this benefactor of mine.

"I am sorry. I shall hold myself responsible."

"Are you really in a position to feel responsible for all this?"

"Yes, I am. I'll resign immediately."

"I didn't think you were such a fool. I believe in your integrity."

"I hate to disappoint you, Dr. Matsuzaki, but I was in

the wrong."

"Do you feel guilty in the sense that Christ taught us in the Sermon on the Mount about looking on a woman to lust after her?" "More than that. I feel ashamed of myself."

"There's nothing I can do then. Oh! Good God!" the director cried, his voice full of anguish.

Quietly I shut the door behind me. A part of my life

had completely ended.

# Chapter 23

### THE DIRECTOR'S GOOD FRIEND

When I was expelled from the middle school of my home town and came to Tokyo like a dog with his tail between his legs, it was Director Matsuzaki who kindly took me in. I studied several years under his tutelage, going through both middle school and college. Then I graduated from an American university and pursued my postgraduate studies there, thanks solely to Director Matsuzaki. I had determined to serve Shirokane Gakuin for the rest of my life by way of repaying his kindness. Nothing was farther from my mind than leaving my Alma Mater, but I was obliged to resign.

Again it was Director Matsuzaki who came to my rescue. He was kind enough to introduce me to his friend Mr.

Arao, a leading business man.

"You have failed in education. Try business," he said in

a kindly tone of voice.

I had never dreamed of switching from teaching English literature to being a businessman. Being poor at figures and having no knowledge of bookkeeping, I hesitated to accept the offer. My prospective boss, however, was an intimate friend of Director Matsuzaki and was prepared to take me on, no matter how green I was. I screwed up my courage and decided to accept the work.

As soon as I got started in my new position, I moved to Shibuya to keep away from the Sato family. As I happened to find a house at Shibuya, I moved there. If I had found one at Shitaya, I should have moved to Shitaya. Everything I did was in a happy-go-lucky manner. No one ever thought of the possibility of the Pacific War at that time. Looking back, however, I realize that I was destined to be burned out of that house in twenty years time. Being naturally lazy, I had never tried to move, once established.

Fate had put me in an ideal position in the new work. I was handed over from the best man in education to the

best man in business.

"Matsuzaki and I were more than childhood friends. We were friends from the cradle. Born in homes next door to each other, we differ widely in character. In that respect he stands high above me, I must confess," President Arao said at our first interview.

He was outspoken in his remarks. He told me that since I was recommended by Dr. Matsuzaki he decided to take me, although he knew quite well that I was of no use in his business.

"For the present, you might work as my secretary and let me see how incompetent a teacher is in business."

"Having no business experience, I shall surely be worth-

less to you," I said weakly.

"Whether you are worth anything or not doesn't matter. Since Matsuzaki, my friend, entrusted you to me, I've got to take you." Mr. Arao continued to make much of Dr. Matsuzaki's recommendation.

"But I am afraid I shall only give you trouble," I

protested.

"Don't worry, I'll make a business man of you. According to Matsuzaki, you are very good in English. But don't think you can use your English in your work. An interpreter would end as a skilled laborer. Once you start in business, you should aim at the top. I'll tell you more later on."

Having branded me as incompetent from the first, the

duty he assigned me was secretary to the president and clerk in the foreign trade department. The acting manager of this department, Tatsuo Arao, son of the president, had returned home a few years earlier after graduating from an American university. Naturally, Tatsuo and I found a lot to talk about and became good friends. The company was operating a pretty big business in foreign trade. According to Dr. Matsuzaki, business was "buying something at one place where it was plentiful, transporting it to another place where it was wanted, and selling it at a higher price." It did not seem so simple a matter, however, when you were actually engaged in business. There's always a gap between theory and practice.

Once in a while, President Arao invited me to his home. A man of the world, he had his own outlook on life. When he had drunk too much, he would foolishly brag about it. One such evening he gave a character sketch of Dr. Matsu-

zaki that was a sort of caricature.

"In short, Matsuzaki is a scholar who has pursued dead learning. He doesn't have any common sense. All he does is lecture on the Bible. That's all. If he meddles with real life, he makes a mess of it. He has no sense in practical matters," he concluded.

I didn't say a word.

"I'm inclined to doubt the common sense of the man who describes Dr. Matsuzaki like that."

"What? You doubt my common sense? How dare you!"
"I believe I have a better understanding of Dr. Matsu-

zaki than you."

"If he had common sense, he would be making a fool of me on purpose. I've got to blame him all the more. I believe I hold a pretty high position in business circles, but Matsuzaki doesn't pay me sufficient respect. He still calls me Ko-chan or Ko-bo, using my boyhood name."

"That's because he's intimate with you, your lifelong

friend," I said.

"You are not much good to me. You take Matsuzaki's part every time," Arao said petulantly.

"Mr. Maruo, don't discuss anything with him. He's three

sheets to the wind," Mrs. Arao broke in.

"Let's talk in the next room, Maruo. My old lady is meddlesome."

Mr. Arao took me to his study. I thought I could hold my own in the argument but, if I differed from him about Dr. Matsuzaki, I would be cutting my own throat. I wondered if he didn't intend to fire me tactfully, having already become disgusted with my incompetency.

"I have the same intimate feeling toward Matsuzaki, but I call him Yasunosuke-kun in full and never sound disrespectful, while he says, 'Hey, Ko-chan, my bad boy, haven't

you reformed yet?' It sounds impolite. doesn't it?"

"Does he really say that?"

"Yes, that's how he treats me. He thinks business is a wicked way of life."

"That may be because he is religious. He has often told

me to repent."

"That he takes a dim view of business is true. When I suffered a big loss at the end of World War I, far from sympathizing with me, he laughed and asked if I did business to make a profit. I answered that everyone did business to make a profit. Then he said, 'When I want to turn to the right in the street. I turn to the right unerringly, but merchants bungle even this simple procedure. Aren't they strange?'"

I laughed in spite of myself. "What! You agree with him?"

"No, sir, it sounded exactly like him!"

"But business isn't so easy as walking in the street. Of course, walking in a Tokyo street is no picnic."

"I agree with you."

"But," Arao continued, draining his glass again, "Matsuzaki makes me see red when he uses such a nonsensical example."

"He may have been joking."

"No, he was serious. He simply believes in that theory. It is clearly irrational. There is no doubt about it and yet, once we start an argument, he always beats me. Why?"

"He's an eloquent man, you must admit. He may some-

times reason black into white."

"Yes, very likely. He is remarkably good at logic. But when Matsuzaki came to see me about your problem, he cleverly humbled himself by addressing me as Mr. Arao or Koichiro-kun."

"Did he come on my account?"

"Yes. Twice. He told me, 'Due to lack of virtue on my part I had to discharge my most loving disciple' and seemed lost in thought with his arms folded."

"I feel. . . ."

"Then he gave a detailed report of your personal history and said that he regretted losing you but he couldn't keep you in your college job. He frankly asked me to take you into my business. Is this the proper way to ask for someone's help? He didn't know what to do. At heart he still despises the business world. This attitude of his stung me to the quick. I turned him down, saying the business world was not the same as the educational world. He claimed they did not differ, but I wouldn't give in and finally sent him away."

"You did?"

"He came again the following evening and said, 'My dear Arao, as you say, the business world is not the same as the world of education.' At these words I was delighted and, while I was off my guard, he forced me to acknowledge that education is altruism and business is egoism. Altruism is represented by Sakura Sogoro, who died a martyr to save his fellow-townsmen groaning under the yoke of tyranny. Egoism is represented by Ishikawa Goemon, the Japanese Robin Hood."

"Did you admit such nonsense?"

"Yes, I did. I was in an agreeable mood. The wonders of wine, you know. He further stated that inferior goods can-

not be a substitute for good material, but good material can substitute very well for inferior goods. That's how he imposed you on me. Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have given you up, even though I had begged for your services. What an abnormal request! Do you know of any one who ever made a request in such an arrogant manner?"

"Well, no."

"If he wasn't out of his mind, he was making a fool of me!"

"I'm very sorry to hear it."

"While I was joking with him, I found myself caught in

his trap. He finally made me say yes."

"I fully understand the situation, Mr. Arao! Before I cause you any more trouble, I'll hand in my resignation!" "Please do so, if you don't mind."

"Then, I'll. . . ."

The tipsy president burst out laughing, "It's a joke, Maruo. Just a joke!"

"But I don't understand."

"Once I get hold of you, I shall never let you go. To tell the truth, just this morning I dropped in to see Matsuzaki to thank him. Buckle down and work hard for me!"

"Do you mean it? I was about to make up my mind to

leave."

"You may be feeling a little strange now, but by and by you will consider the company your home. Business is a fascinating game. Do your best for me."

"Thank you, sir."

"By the way, Matsuzaki recommended you most highly in every respect except one. He couldn't guarantee one point, but it's a secret from you."

"Tell me, please! What is it?"

"Your weakness for women! He says he can't guarantee your behavior on that point."

"I admit it. I like women."

"Were you fired for meddling with geisha girls?"

"No, nothing of the sort!"

"Though business is not the same as school, you'd better behave yourself in that respect."

"Oh, I will. I promise."

"Matsuzaki worries about you, Maruo. He asked me to see that you got married and set up a home. We'll see about that later on."

It was early winter, but I felt the perspiration running down my back. Somehow I had a feeling that this enterprising man might succeed where others had failed.

# Chapter 24

#### TWO MEN OF CHARACTER

In a little over a year I began to feel at home with the company, and in the fall I went to Osaka on business. I had been there once before with the president, but this time I

was alone. I stayed at the Do-Bil Hotel again.

Telepathy seems to work in our daily life sometimes. One morning I happened to think of Haruyo and her husband, Yoshida. I had never thought of them while I was a teacher; however, since I had been working for the trading company, I often did. Yoshida must be working for a trading company. It was almost ten years since I had heard he was an assistant manager in the Osaka branch office. He was probably a manager by this time. I wondered where in Osaka he might be. Just as my mind reached the logical conclusion that I would go and see him if I had his address, I heard a knock at the door.

"Come in!" I cried. "It's not locked."

The door swung inward and there stood Yoshida.

"Hello!" he said casually. "Why, hello, Yoshida!"

"It has been a long time, Zen-san."

Yoshida had been in the hotel the day before and had caught a glimpse of me near the elevator. On his return home he told Haruyo about it. She said she knew I was in business now, and that I must have come to Osaka for my company. Yoshida phoned the hotel for confirmation but, thinking a surprise call would be more fun, he showed up while I was in bed.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" I exclaimed.

"Why?" he asked.

"I was just thinking of you," I replied.

"You are saying that to be polite, aren't you?"

"No, indeed. It's true."

"Be that as it may, it was wrong of you not to write us all these years."

"I'm very sorry about that."

"Do you come to Osaka often?"

"I was here last spring."

"Why didn't you come to see us then! You should have known we were here."

"I was just thinking that this time I would look you up—when you came in. Do you believe in telepathy?"

"That's not telepathy but just coincidence." Yoshida

replied.

He obviously did not believe me. His daily contact with all sorts of people had made him skeptical.

"Believe me, it's true."

"Telepathy or no telepathy, you must come to our house this evening."

"Of course I will!"

In the evening, Yoshida came back to get me in his car and, while riding to his home, we brought each other up to date on the news. He was already a senior branch manager of his company and expected to be made a director shortly. I, who had vowed to look down upon Masanobu

Sagara, was only a private secretary. What good had my trip to America been?

"How do you do?" I said formally, bowing to Haruyo. I offered no other words of apology for my long silence.

"This is Choko." Haruyo proudly introduced her daughter. I knew that she had a daughter but, because I felt spiteful toward her, I had forgotten all about the child. To my surprise, she looked exactly like Mitsuko. I couldn't help staring at her for a minute but, because I didn't like to show them how shocked I was at her likeness to Mitsuko, I simply said, "Is that you, Choko-chan? You've grown to be a big girl!"

"This is my only child," said Yoshida, as though he

wished for more.

"Children are heavenly gifts, Yoshida. You take the one you get."

"Mitsuko had quite a number."

I pretended not to hear Mitsuko's name.

"Miss Butterfly (Choko)! Isn't that a lovely name?

How old are you?"

"She is sixteen," Haruyo prompted. "Third grader in girls' high school."

"That tells us that sixteen years have gone by."

"You are thirty-nine now, Haruyo-san."

"Yes, I'm an old woman now."
"No, you're in the prime of life."

I was the same age as Haruyo. Yoshida, Kosuke's classmate, was forty-five. We all laughed at this plain statement of our ages.

"Do you smoke cigars?" Yoshida asked in a rather doubt-

ful tone when I offered him one.

"You taught me to smoke when you lived in Aoyama. Don't you remember?"

"How about drinking?"

"I have you to thank for that, too."

"I'm not responsible for your drinking, Zen-san."

"Maybe I'm a born drinker."

"How pleasant life was in those days!"

"Well, I wasn't so happy then."

We talked about the past over dinner.

"I have to make an apology to you, Zenzaburo-san," Haruyo said soberly.

"What is it?" I knew what she meant, but I asked

anyway.

"About Mitsuko!"

"Oh. What about Mitsuko?"

"Please forgive me!"

"Forgive you for what?"

"Choko! Go in the other room. We are talking about something private."

"Why can't I stay here, Mom? I know everything."

Choko replied. Haruyo did not insist on her leaving.

"I knew that you two were in love with each other, but you never came out and told me. I couldn't keep Mitsuko waiting so long. Girls grow old faster than men, you know, and chances pass them by. So I arranged the Sagara interview."

"There's no use talking about it. It was all so long ago."

"I asked Mitsuko if she was definitely engaged to you, but she said she was not."

"Don't say any more about it, please! It's all over!"

"But Mitsuko is still worrying, thinking you are angry with her."

"Is she?"

"Please be friends again."

"I'll be glad to."

"I'm sorry my foolish interference caused both you and Mitsuko such heartbreak."

"Please don't say anything else. I quite understand."

"Haruyo is still grieving over it, Zen-san," Yoshida interrupted her, and tactfully changed the subject.

But Haruyo kept right on, "If you had been here a

month earlier, you could have seen Mitsuko."

"In this house?"

"No, in Osaka."

"You see," Yoshida explained, "Masanobu was with the local division until last month. Now he has been put on the waiting list and has gone home."

"Oh, has he?" I tried to appear indifferent.

"He's not much good at getting ahead in the army. Besides, he wasn't on good terms with the regimental commander and finally had a quarrel with him. That's why he was put on the list."

"Isn't he waiting for a new appointment?"

"No. After a year he will be transferred to the reserve list. He'll end his military career as a lieutenant colonel."

"It's too early, isn't it?"

"He was so angry that he spoke of stabbing the regimental commander to death and then committing harakiri to save the honor of his samurai family. It was all I could do to stop him and send him home. The commander is to blame. He is a vicious fellow."

"What a shame!" Haruyo said, making a wry face. "They were rivals for the love of the beautiful widow of one of their colleagues. Masanobu won, and was all set to enjoy his victory, when the commander turned the tables on him."

"Mitsuko cried bitterly over his disgraceful discharge," Haruyo continued. "I took Masanobu to task for it myself."

I felt as though I were relieved of a burden to know that my rival would end as a lieutenant colonel. I no longer needed to look down on him, since he had revealed his character openly. Thus I thought my problem had solved itself.

"By the way, why did you change from a teacher to an office worker?" Yoshida asked me point-blank.

"There was no reason whatsoever."

"But why did you discard your promising future as a professor and go into the business world? Anybody could do that."

"Well, now. . . ."

"When I heard the rumor that you had given up education, I couldn't understand why," Haruyo said. "You once told me you hated to work for money."

"I was discharged from school," I confessed.

"On what grounds?"
"Good grounds."

"I wondered why you, with your American Ph.D., didn't suit the school?"

"I've no right to laugh at Sagara. I was trapped in the same kind of trouble. And I held myself responsible."

I told them the whole story of how I was run after by

the wife of a colleague and the resulting disgrace.

"What a surprise! It sounds like good misfortune to me. You were quite a lady's man, weren't you?" Yoshida said admiringly. He tried to check up on Sato and his wife, but couldn't because of the difference in ages.

"Men are all foolish," Haruyo deplored.
"We can't disagree with you on that."

"Masanobu-san, Zen-san and Ken-san, who envies Zen-san, are all the same."

"I never envied him," Yoshida denied vigorously.

"But didn't you say it was good misfortune?"
"I meant to say a good bit of a misfortune!"

"You can't fool me! Was he a lady's man because of it?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"Oho, ho, ho." Choko asserted herself by laughing. It seemed to be a sort of education Haruyo was providing for her daughter.

"Zen-san!"

"What is it?"

"I was a fool to have made an apology to you, since you were just as bad as Masanobu-san."

"Yes, you are quite right. Neither of us is a model of

morality."

"I don't think you are the same," Yoshida said warmly, "for you were pursued and at last forced to love her in spite of yourself. But Masanobu ran after the beautiful widow from the very beginning, even before she was a widow."

"One was run after by a wife. The other ran after a widow. Both reached the same goal. Zen-san, was it truly her fault?" Haruyo asked.

"Don't tease me. I remember debating with you, but this time you are a judge and I am a prisoner in the dock."

"In educational circles a teacher must be above reproach and you had to retire for a mere rumor. What a shame!" Yoshida said sympathetically.

"But does a teacher hand in his resignation for a mere

rumor? I don't think so." Haruyo was not convinced.

"Haruyo-san, you are right. Where there is smoke, there is fire. There was fire enough, I am sorry to admit."

"Then is that man Sato still working for the college?"

asked Haruyo.

"No. He was persuaded to give up his position and move to another private university in Tokyo."

"That tells the story. Is the fire still burning?"

"No. I have never seen her since. But to tell the truth, I think of her now and then."

"What a fool you are, Zen-san! Then you and Masanobu are even."

"Life is a funny thing, after all," Yoshida said, laughing

pleasantly.

"Just what do you mean by that?" Haruyo asked her husband, and glared at me.

### Chapter 25

### PAINTED BY KIYOKATA

I was made a director at forty-two, which reveals that the company was not a leading concern. It was a pretty big one, however.

About this time the Yoshidas moved to Tokyc. Yoshida called on me one day and gave me his business card, on

which was printed "Executive Director."

"At long last I've reached the goal I set for myself," he said, grinning happily. I knew he had been champing at the bit all the time he was a branch manager in Osaka.

A few years ago I had built my house and now lived with an old woman housekeeper and a maid. I led a bachelor's lonely life. Although I had a comfortable income, I believed in the plain-living and high-thinking principle. I got along without luxuries except for a car, for which I had to add a garage to the house.

Yoshida rented a house at Aoyama near his old home. It was on the way from my house to the center of the city. I often visited them now, as I had done twenty years ago. That many years had really gone by. I could now look

back upon the past complacently.

Exhibitionist Haruyo often revealed her emotions. "Zensan, hard times are really over," she exulted one day. She may have been recalling inadequate paychecks in the early days of her married life. But now, as a director's wife, she could lead a life of plenty, plenty to wear, plenty to eat and plenty to see.

"You must be saving a lot, Zen-san, for you have no one

to spend your money for you," Haruyo boldly commented

on my financial status.

Her only daughter, Choko, was now nineteen, and was attending the Women's University at Mejiro. She was a perfect counterpart of Mitsuko at her age. It seemed strange that an aunt and a niece could resemble each other so strongly. I gazed at her so intently that she felt shy and said, "Don't stare at me so, Uncle Zen."

"Why? You look so much like her."

"Aunty Mitsuko? Ho, ho, ho."

"No, the beauty painted by Kiyokata."

Now Kaburagi Kiyokata was the best painter of the Ukiyoe school, specializing in beautiful women.

"You think so too, Mom?" Choko asked, preening her-

self.

"Yes, I do. I thought so when I saw his illustration in a recent magazine." I was glad Haruyo confirmed my opinion.

"You are the beauty painted by Kiyokata come to life."

"At school a friend of mine asked me if I were a relative of Kiyokata and if I was his model."

"You are recognized by every one. I'll call you Kiyokata

beauty from now on."

"You are tricky, Uncle Zen."

"Why am I tricky?"
"That's my secret."

As far as the academic guidance of their daughter was concerned, both Yoshida and Haruyo passed it on unawares to me. Luckily for me, she was majoring in English literature at her university. I often found her waiting impatiently for me. As soon as she saw me, she would ask for my help in studying for a test. Reading books with a nineteen-year-old girl made me feel as if I were a young man of twenty again. When I was reading her an English poem, I remembered the dialogue of twenty years ago:

"What shall we begin with?"

"I'm no good at English."
"I'll find something easy."

"We might place any book at all between us."

"Shall we read Wordsworth?"

"You are too honest, aren't you?"

It was a hot summer day once more on the veranda of my Uncle's home in Shinmachi. Yes, it was the day I shot a grass arrow at Mitsuko.

"Uncle, you often fall into a brown study. What are you

thinking about?"

"I was enchanted by Kiyokata beauty!"

"Don't say that, Uncle Zen!"

Believing myself older and wiser than I was, I still could not help being filled with the old yearning. How could I forget Mitsuko with young Choko sitting here beside me her eyes shining as Mitsuko's once shone, and every feature of her beautiful face a perfect duplicate of my darling Mitsuko. I thought my heart would burst with longing.

At home no one but the old housekeeper and the maid were waiting for me. In Yoshida's house the charm of peace and harmony naturally attracted me. This was also proof of my strict life. If I had been a teahouse visitor and a playmate of geisha girls, as were most business men, I would not have sought consolation in the home life of other

people.

During the three years before Yoshida had his new house built at Tabata (the opposite side of Tokyo), I visited in his home quite often. One day I met a surprise guest, Sagara Masanobu. He excelled in chess and had come to Tokyo to get his dan (graded qualification in chess). He was of an old family that owned several mountains and forests and could live comfortably without working. I also had an opportunity to meet Haruyo's brother Yoichi, when he came up from Osaka.

"You are a literary man, after all, Uncle Zen. A literary

man in a business man's disguise!" Choko said one day. She was a sophomore now and was developing into a versatile young woman.

"You may be right, for I'm a business man who isn't

interested in money-making."

"You aren't like Dad. He is a greedy, grasping man."

"That's too harsh, isn't it?"

"He's one of the poor in spirit who knows no literature. He hates to hear music and hates to see a play. He is absolutely impossible."

"But he goes to the theater once in a while, doesn't he?"

"Yes, with Mom. The best part of the theater to him is the dining hall, where he can enjoy a few bottles of sake. All the time the play is on he dozes in his seat, nudged from time to time by Mom. But when intermission comes, he is always wide awake."

"Is that so? He can drink sake at home, can't he?

"Yes, but in the theater he can pose as a patron and

lift his cup for others to see."

"Come to think of it, he often invites me to drink with him but never suggests going to the theater. How about wrestling? He once invited me to a wrestling match."

"Yes, wrestling is probably the only pastime he can

understand."

"Everybody understands wrestling."

"I enjoy talking with you, Uncle Zen, more than with anyone else."

"Why?"

"Because you even have a literary smell about you, Uncle Zen."

"You must be one of the literary-minded girls everybody is talking about nowadays."

"Maybe I am."

"I have taken the wrong course in life. If I had devoted myself to literature, I might have attained fame by now."

"I do hate the woman who misguided you."

"Was there such a woman?"

"Don't be silly, Uncle!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"However, as the head of a family, I'd prefer a man like my Dad to a man of letters. I think a mediocre husband makes his wife happier. Mom seems really happy."

"It is always springtime in this house. This is one of the

happiest families, I know."

"Are you being sarcastic, Uncle Zen?"

"No, I really mean it."

"I don't think you do. You think both Dad and Mom are fools!"

"You seem to want to pick a quarrel with me this evening. I'd better say good-bye right now."

"I'm sorry. Let's not talk about individuals any more.

Did Mom tell you I was hard to please?"

"No, she didn't. While I was reading the life of Carlyle the other day, I felt sorry for his wife. He was always quarreling with her."

"Carlyle was an exceptional case. He suffered from chronic dyspepsia, which made him moody all his life."

"His wife's presence annoyed him," I went on. "One evening, he said she might stay beside him if she didn't speak. She knitted silently. He complained of the rustling sound of her needles. She stopped knitting and remained motionless. Then he said, 'Your breathing annoys me!"

"When you get married, you'll be just like Carlyle."

"I doubt it, Choko-chan."

"But you like Carlyle, don't you?"

"I don't like him enough to ignore such idiosyncrasies. You really have it in for me tonight, haven't you?"

"No, not in the least. But I'm happy when I talk this

way with you, Uncle Zen."

About this time their new house at Tabata was nearing completion. Choko was quite excited about her study, which was planned for the new house. It was to be an old-fashioned 4%-mat room.

"I was waiting for you, Uncle Zen. I want you to do me

a favor. Will you write me a shikishi? \* I want to hang it on the wall," she said one evening.

"Okay, what do you want me to write?"

"Write a haiku, please."

"I don't compose a haiku now."

"Think of a haiku that suits my study."

I saw an iris she had arranged in the alcove. I took up a writing brush.

An iris blooming like the symbol Of a beauty drawn by Kiyokata—O how I adore. . . .

I got this far in a moment or two, and then I paused to think how I might end it. Seeing Mitsuko's double in front of me, I meant to close it, "How I adore another one far away," but I was afraid of offending Choko.

"What do you adore?" Choko asked.

"You, of course. 'How I adore its youth and elegance.'"
I concluded my little piece.

"Aren't you thinking of another Kiyokata?"

"No, no!" I protested.

"If so, I shall turn into a green-eyed monster. Don't forget!" Choko gave my arm a really hard pinch.

<sup>\*</sup>Shikishi is a square piece of mounted paper, usually colored or patterned, on which Japanese poems are written.

### Chapter 26

### CROWN UNDER THE APRICOT TREE

My older brother's son Kiyoshi, after graduating from a high school in Sendai, came to Tokyo to attend the university and made his home with me. In those days "the university" meant simply the Imperial University. Private schools were gradually gaining recognition, but they were

still regarded as inferior.

During the four years since I had become a leading member of the firm my daily life had been pretty busy. To my satisfaction, however, everything was going along smoothly. Nominally, Arao was still president, but he had established another company and transferred most of the management. Tatsuo and I now ran things pretty much to suit ourselves.

I shall never forget President Arao's patronage. He had made a business man of me, training me for five years. When I was appointed managing director, he said to me with a smile of triumph, "Well, now, what do you think? Everybody knows his trade. I have made a business man of you. Could you return to education now?"

"I think I could," I answered.

"Hey, what did you say?"

"If the same income were assured, I would go back to teaching."

"How dare you contradict me? Are you still obsessed

with Shakespeare?"

"Don't worry. I could never earn a good enough living in education."

"You discourage me after all my effort."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Arao. I shouldn't have spoken so

frankly."

"I appreciate your spirit. You are always persistent in an argument. And so am I. Hope you'll agree to be managing director."

"I accept the appointment with many thanks. I don't know how to thank you for your interest and help. I can only promise to do my best in return for your kindness."

'Good! I'm glad to have fulfilled my promise to Matsu-

zaki."

"I think I'll call on Dr. Matsuzaki and tell him right now

how grateful I am."

"Don't forget to give him my compliments. I found out that one thing he told me about you wasn't true."

"What was that?"

"He said that he couldn't guarantee you'd be above reproach where women were concerned, but you don't seem like a philanderer to me."

"You must know Dr. Matsuzaki is a kind of sage. His

criterion differs from ours."

"It seems so. Was your affair with a geisha girl?"

"Then some one's wife."

"Please don't ask me. I am quite repentant now."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha. You don't sound like it."

"I don't like to have you misunderstand me."
"I thought Matsuzaki meant it in a general way."

"What?"

"Your weakness for women. There are some sober-looking men who meddle not only with women of easy virtue but with typists and other office girls. That's why I placed unattractive girls around you."

"So that's why I got such a plain Jane for a secretary."

"Yes. His needless remark about you gave me unnecessary worry."

"I'm sorry for that."

I couldn't help smiling when I thought of his words "meddling with." I know a lot of honest-looking men who can't be trusted.

Kiyoshi was with me for three years and knew all about my life in those days. A managing director was comparable to a samurai of distinction in feudal times.

"You are a gokaro-sama (the chief retainer of a feudal

lord), making one thousand koku of rice."

Kiyoshi held me in high regard, counting my income by the old standard. He compared the chauffeur with an ashigaru (the lowest-paid retainer), because a present day chauffeur's income was equivalent to that of an ashigaru in feudal days. Being a student of economics, he took de-

light in that sort of research.

Every morning I was driven to the office in a car by that ashigaru. After supervising the office work in the daytime, I went around to a machiai (teahouse) in the evening, because most of the important negotiations were carried on there. Even cabinet ministers and politicians make use of teahouses. Bribes are offered there, giving rise to the expression teahouse politics. Kiyoshi was anxious to know what was going on in the teahouses. He took me to be pretty adventurous with geisha girls there.

"Do geisha girls sometimes come to our house, Uncle

Zen?"

"I can't guarantee they don't."

"I'd like to see some of the geisha girls of Tokyo."

"Since you look forward to seeing the geisha girls of Tokyo, you've meddled with country geisha girls, I guess."

"No, never!" Kiyoshi was flustered.

About this time a woman singer named Nobuko Yasui was becoming very popular. She was a charming beauty of about thirty who, I thought, had become famous because of her looks. She was said to have had her musical training in America, but her geographical knowledge of that country was not at all correct. She claimed to be unmarried and have no family ties, which was as much as to say, "Please

seduce me, if you will. I am free!" She really was a volup-

tuous-looking woman.

President Arao, her greatest admirer, formed a society for her support. I was a member of the club to which the president belonged. As all of the old sinners of the club had registered as members of the Nobuko Yasui Supporters Society, it soon became a large group. Mr. Arao was elected chairman, and I was made secretary.

At the inauguration meeting Mr. Arao stood up and said, "The object of the society is, as its name explains, to support Miss Nobuko Yasui in her pursuance of musical art, promote her social position, and assure her of her livelihood. As you see, she is a beautiful woman. But, needless to say, she is the common treasure of the members of the society. No one should entertain a notion of monopolizing Miss Nobuko Yasui."

"Hear! Hear!" cried all the members, clapping their hands.

"In other words, no one should try to meddle with her," President Arao said emphatically. Everybody laughed loudly. But in reality all those who clapped and laughed were red-blooded, lustful men.

As secretary of the society I had to see Miss Yasui occasionally. As I was too busy in the office to see her, whenever she had any business to talk over, she came to my house. The society underwrote a large number of tickets to any concert she sang in, besides sponsoring her own recitals.

"Please help me, Maruo-san," she would ask me in a coaxing voice. An admirer of her style of beauty, I was an

easy victim.

One Sunday when she called on me, my neighbor, Mr. Furukawa, happened to be there to see my bonsai (potted dwarf tree). He was an elderly attendant to a certain Imperial Prince. Being proud of working for such a distinguished person, he never forgot to mention his master whenever there was a chance. When I introduced them,

Mr. Furukawa said he had heard her name and expressed his desire to have the Prince and Princess hear her recitals. This was said as much out of pride as of praise, but Miss Yasui took it seriously. She began to call on Mr. Furukawa often. Each time she did she dropped in at my house and talked until late at night. Occasionally, I had to take her home in the car.

"Come, drive me home in your car, Maruo-san," she

would say.

During the year I had this extra-curricular secretary's job there was quite a bit of gossip going around.

"How shameless Maruo is! Taking advantage of his

position, he is having an affair with Miss Yasui!"

Having learned to my cost what it was to fall for a flirt, I had been on the alert from the very beginning. I was all the more careful because she had suddenly appeared from nowhere and nobody knew her background. Moreover, because she was a famous woman, all the senior members of the club kept a watchful eye on her. If anyone bothered this woman, he would be either a damned fool or an adventurer or both.

One day I was called in to the president's office. After sending the secretary out of the room, he said, "By the way, have you heard the choice gossip going around the club?"

"No. Tell me what it is."

"This is a matter I can't say to you as a gentleman, but excuse me, as you and I are members of the same family, so to speak. I'm sorry to learn Matsuzaki's warning is proving to be true!"

"I can guess what it is now, Mr. Arao."

"Because you are a bachelor they'll make a fuss about you. I don't like to believe it, but still the rumor makes me feel uneasy. To be frank with you, aren't you having an affair with Nobuko?"

"No, nothing could be more absurd!"

"But I understand she often calls on you. I know she has to see you about business, though."

"Not so frequently as you think. She drops in only when she comes to my neighbor's house."

"You mean the attendant to an Imperial Prince?"

"Yes, I rather suspect him of evil intentions. He might try to seduce her with the promise of a recital attended by the Prince."

"I'd very much like to have her give such a recital. Will you cooperate with her in this respect? At the same time you must keep a sharp eye on Furukawa."

"Are you one of those who crave the favor of the

Imperial Household, Mr. President?"

"She'll be glamorized, if she performs in the presence of a prince."

"I hate toadying to royalty," I said.

"If you don't like it, it's all right. But isn't driving at night with her risky?"

"If she stays too late, I can't help it."

"Members don't know the actual circumstances and, partly through jealousy, they make a fuss over it, which makes me worry, too."

"It's too bothersome. Please relieve me of the secretary's

job."

"That would arouse their suspicion all the more. You must be more careful, that's all."

"Yes?"

"Rumors are apt to be scandalous. There is no way to stop them. However, your contact with Nobuko as secretary of the Society is honorable. You needn't feel anxious any longer."

"Yes, I understand."

"However, you must bear in mind the wise Chinese saying, 'Neither adjust your crown under the apricot tree, nor step into the melon field.' That is to say, you cannot be too careful in such matters."

"Thank you for your good advice," I said politely.

I could not understand how he knew anything—the midnight drive, for instance? Had my chauffeur been

bribed to spy on me? Impossible! As I am not the fawning type, I never mentioned her intended recital before the

Imperial Prince.

Toward the end of the year, when it was very cold, Mr. Arao went to Kansai and sent back his secretary, saying he would stay with his friend, a doctor, to try to reduce his blood pressure. It was reported that he was staying at a very quiet villa at Suma beach.

A few days later a telegram arrived from a certain hot spring resort in Kii province: "President had stroke

send someone immediately."

Mrs. Arao was laid up with a cold and fever. With Tatsuo, I rushed to Kishu immediately. The place was called Shirahama.

"Glad you've both come!" a woman's voice reached us.
To our astonishment, Miss Nobuko Yasui came out.

Fortunately Mr. Arao's illness was slight.

"The stroke has come at last, but it's not serious. Look!" he said. He moved both of his hands to show he was well, but he never made clear why he was staying in a hotel at Shirahama instead of recuperating at his doctor friend's at Suma.

"You arrived here first of all! When did you come, Miss Yasui?" I asked.

"I was with him all along!" She answered in a matter-offact way. Then she told us about his illness from the first attack. Though it was a mild one, it was diagnosed as apoplexy. The doctor at Suma was not an imaginary character. He was already here, having been sent for by wire.

"You should take better care of yourself, Dad!" Tatsuo said. He seemed to feel relieved but looked as sour as vinegar.

"I'm all right now."

"No!"

"It's mild," he insisted.

He was the one who had admonished me, citing the

Chinese lesson of the crown under the apricot tree. He himself was the one doing wrong under the guise of a gentleman and a protector. Who knows but that he had been her lover before forming the society? He had made fools of us all. I understand now why Dr. Matsuzaki often asked him if he had reformed.

About six months later Mr. Arao and I found ourselves standing on the roof. Perhaps we went up there after

lunch.

All of a sudden, the president blurted out, "Pardon me, Maruo. I am ashamed to see you."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't make me explain further!"

"But I don't know what you mean."

"I am sorry I preached you a sermon. I didn't want you to snatch her away from me. You had gained an advantage over me, and I was out of my head with worry."

"You are a sly old badger," I laughed. "But I am a disciple of Dr. Matsuzaki, don't you remember?"

"Never tell Matsuzaki, please."

While I revered Dr. Matsuzaki, I admired Mr. Arao for his simplicity and lack of pretence.

# Chapter 27

### GOBLIN FESTIVAL

It was about this time I gave Kiyoshi the impression that I was always asking about Mitsuko. Because my mother was in good health, I made it a point to go home at least once a year. The access to my home had become much easier than of old, for the railway had been extended to

pass by Tsuruoka, which was a city, amalgamating the

villages around it.

Each time I went home I came across Mitsuko. Since I had to call on all my relatives, I could not make an exception of Masanobu Sagara, who was really a good fellow.

Whenever I saw Mitsuko my heart throbbed. One can never forget one's first love. Home was very dear to me, and memories of Mitsuko as fresh as ever. I found myself rejuvenated into a young man in his early twenties. I remember Mitsuko was always with her husband when I saw her, so I had no chance to talk over our past.

On one visit Sagara asked me openly, "Are you a real bachelor, Zen-san?"

"Indeed, I am."

"I can't understand why you are. What is your reason?" My reason was sitting beside him. I was at a loss as to what to answer.

"I stayed in America too long and let my chance go by. Since then I have gotten used to a carefree life and find myself a confirmed bachelor."

"But man cannot live by bread alone," he said laughing.
"You must be keeping a Number 2 somewhere, though Number 2 without Number 1 sounds a bit odd."

"People generally regard me with some suspicion, but

I am not so well off as to afford a mistress."

"You are lying in your teeth. Tokyo is full of opportunities. People in that city never leave a bachelor director alone."

"Zen-san isn't like you. He's a man of character," Mitsuko broke in. Perhaps she remembered his affair in Osaka and the disgrace it brought them all.

I asked Mitsuko about her children, although I really wasn't interested in how many children she had. I was just

being polite.

"Two in middle school and another in girls' high school."

"How old are you now, Mitsuko-san?"

"Thirty-seven."

"Is that right!" I said, as though I were hearing her age for the first time. I knew she was five years younger than I. "Are you forty-two now, or three?"

"Two, Mitsuko-san."

"Oh! You are the same age as Haruyo. I should have

known that." She also played her part.

"Let me show you my latest find, Zen-san." Sagara suggested, drawing our attention to his hobby. He was a holder of the third grade in chess and a connoisseur of old swords. I had no interest in swords. They are worse than useless and used only for killing others. However, as Mitsuko gave me a persuasive look, I acquiesced with good grace. Once he started talking about swords, he didn't know when to stop.

Even after the death of my mother I continued going home once a year. It so happened that I once got home just on the eve of Tenjin Festival, and I had some unlooked-for good luck for a few minutes. in which I was called back into the world of fantasy and dispelled my

lifelong doubt.

In my native town, Tsuruoka, May is called the festival month. Festival after festival comes in succession. Temples and shrines which were silent during the snowy winter burst into ecstasy at the return of a congenial season. Among others, the Tenjin Festival on the 25th is held on the largest scale. I don't mean to be proud of such a bacchanalian rite, but this particular one shows how rich our countryside is. The entire city would become tipsy, and the way to offer sake was singular.

This festival is called goblin merry-making. Men disguise themselves as women and women as men. Their disguises are elaborate and include straw hats with broad brims, wigs and every variety of clothing. Each goblin carries a quart bottle full of sake and a cup, ready to offer a drink to any one that comes his or her way. It is a rule that those who are offered cannot refuse. All decorum is thrown aside for the day. Goblins enter other people's houses without ceremony and offer drinks. All the houses keep their doors open for goblins coming and going. The goblin takes a sip before offering others a drink to show there is no poison in the cup. The whole town, except for the children, gets intoxicated.

"Zen, you have come back just at the right time. You might try being a goblin. Tsune is dressing up, too." Kosuke

said persuasively.

Tsunejiro had come all the way from his hillside village with his wife and children for the sole purpose of playing the goblin.

"Good idea! I'll visit the relatives in disguise," I agreed

gleefully.

The next morning I disguised myself as a young woman in my sister-in-law's colorful kimono. She helped me to dress me up with an *obi* and all the other accessories.

"A big woman, aren't you?" Kosuke laughed.

Tsunejiro had brought his wife's kimono. He also made a big woman. Each of us having different plans, we parted at the door. This was my first disguise as a goblin. As though wearing an invisible cloak in a fairy tale, I could clearly see other people, while they could not recognize me. I offered sake to some passersby, but as there was no end of them, I started calling on my relatives.

On my first stop, after offering sake, I asked, "Can you

tell me who I am?"

"Dear me, this goblin speaks!"

"Guess who I am."

"Let me see?"

"It's me!"

"Who are you?"

"Zenzaburo of the Maruos."

"Oh, dear!"

"I came back last night."

"How prankish you are!"

"Good-bye! I've got to go to some other houses."

When I passed through the gate of the Sagaras, I felt my heart pounding. Masanobu was at home. I made him drink, but Mitsuko was nowhere to be seen. As I could not ask where she was, I reluctantly left the house. If I could not offer a glass to Mitsuko, the charm of playing goblin would be cut in half.

After dropping in on a few relatives, I passed in front of Uncle Daisuke's old house at Shinmachi, which was full of memories. My uncle had already passed away, and the house itself belonged to other people. Next to this house lived my old classmate and good friend, Katsuemon

Nakamaura. I walked in and offered him a drink.

"I say, can you guess who I am?" "No, I can't. Introduce yourself!"

"Zenzaburo Maruo!"

"So you've come home again."

"Just last night."

"A nice bird has flown in. I won't let you go!" Nakamura caught me by the hand.

Excuse me for a little while. I'll come back later

this evening.' '

"Are you sure?" "Of course I will."

"Then I'll let you go. But wait a minute! A relative of yours is here."

"Who is it?" "Mrs. Sagara."

"Is she here?" I was surprised and looked around.

"She is talking with my wife in the annex. They are old schoolmates. My wife went to the park to see the fancy dress procession and brought her back."

"I see. They used to be neighbors."

"Make her take a drink," Nakamura said. "All right, but don't tell her who I am."

Nakamura took me to the annex and went back out with his wife. I approached Mitsuko with a mimicking step and offered her a glass of *sake*. She accepted it cheerfully but, after taking a sip, she seemed embarrassed as to what to do with the glass.

"If you can't drink, let me help you."

I took back the glass and drained it. Thinking I was a friend of hers in disguise, she was smiling.

"Mitsuko-san!"

"Yes."

"Can you guess who I am?" I asked, my voice trembling.

She pretended to be thinking.

"Zenzaburo-san!" she cried, clasping my hand. "Please don't say anything. What is past is past!"

I was speechless.

"I've loved you all along," she said passionately. "I love you even now and don't say anything!"

"Yes, I understand!" I whispered.

Neither of us could speak. We were sitting motionless and speechless like two statues when Nakamura and his wife came in.

"Did she guess who you are?" asked Nakamura.

"Yes, she did!"

"I knew him right away," Mitsuko told Mr. Nakamura. They both thought we meant my costume, so deep and impenetrable is the disguise of the heart.

# Chapter 28

#### PLANNING FOR HAPPINESS

Even after Yoshida moved far away from Shibuya I still visited them often. Naturally fond of company, Haruyo always gave me a hearty welcome. Choko would call me up and say, "I shall have an interim test next week. Please help me, Uncle Zen, or I shall flunk."

I felt happy to be tutoring Choko in literature, for she was the complete counterpart of her aunt. I seemed to be young again, as though I were reliving my carefree days with Mitsuko, Haruya saw through ma I am certain

with Mitsuko. Haruyo saw through me, I am certain.

"You two are surely talkative. Is English literature that fascinating? Shutting yourselves up in a room as if you were a pair of lovers! If it weren't Zen-san, I would be uneasy about you, Choko," she would say.

"Mom, do you think Uncle Zen loves me because of

me?" Choko asked with a grin.

"Because he is a relative of yours, he takes time out of his busy life to help you."

"Oho, ho, ho, ho."

"What are you laughing at?"

"You are too simple-minded, Mom! He loves me because I look like the woman he loves."

"Who is the woman that is like you?"

"She seems to be his true love. Tonight he said she was much cleverer than I."

"Zen-san is making fun of you just to make you work harder," Haruyo said, trying to avoid the subject.

It was when she was a junior that a small shadow was cast on Choko's light heart. I was not necessarily teaching her for the reason she guessed. I did it as a relief from the cares of my business. My talks on literature were not systematic but casual and haphazard.

"I probably will leave home, Uncle Zen," Choko said one evening. Unusually pampered, she was not afraid to say anything that popped into her mind. I was not at all

surprised.

"Got a lover?" I inquired with a straight face.

"Wish I could get one!"

"Why?"

"Mom and I think absolutely differently about

everything."

It was just about this time that Haruyo confided in me their plans for Choko's marriage. Since their daughter was an heiress, they could not give her away in marriage but had to adopt a husband for her. To save the situation they had picked out a second son of one of Yoshida's relatives and financed his entire course at Commercial University.

"It's Toyozo, you see. He will make a perfect husband for Choko, won't he?" Haruyo spoke proudly of her careful

planning.

Having met him often, I knew Toyozo well. The directors' job has given me a keen eye for judging people. In my opinion Toyozo was neither good nor bad, but only average.

"Is that so? Is Toyozo a candidate?"

"No, not a candidate but the definite husband-to-be. His school record was good, and above all his personality is gentle and obedient. Tell him to face right and he will keep his face right until you tell him to turn it back. He is the right man for Choko."

"Does Choko-san know it?"

"Yes. As she had gotten wind of it, I told her the plan the other day."

"Congratulations!"

"But the trouble is that Choko is against it. She is a stubborn girl."

"Then the plan is no good, is it?"

"We'll find some way to make her give in. She might think it humiliating, if she agreed immediately. We'll win her over in time."

"She isn't positively against it, is she?" I asked. I felt a bit worried.

"Right now she's pretty obstinate. Will you please try to persuade her that we have acted wisely in planning for her happiness."

"Well, if she isn't inclined to. . . ."

"If you reason with her, she will listen to you. A husband like Toyozo isn't easy to find. Moreover, we have invested quite a lot in his education since he graduated from middle school. He should treat her well, from a sense

of obligation if for nothing else."

Man proposes; God disposes, so they say. Man's proposition is not always endorsed by God's disposition. Haruyo should reflect more seriously on the matter, considering how she once dealt with her sister. Marriage must develop from love, and it was a mistake to try to force love and marriage as she was doing. In a roundabout way I protested for Choko's sake.

"Is Kenichi-kun of the same opinion?" I asked frankly,

for I doubted her husband's intelligence.

"Yes, he is. I had a candidate on my relatives' side, but I agreed to take Toyozo to save Kenichi's face," she answered. She lived in an entirely different world.

"You should think more of respecting Choko-san's

feelings than of saving Kenichi-kun's face," I urged.

"Zen-san, you don't know what you are saying. Choko is still a child. How can she know the world! What a queer person you are! I expected that you would be pleased with the plan, but on the contrary you are quite critical and are blaming me."

"Haruyo-san, please don't misunderstand me."

"Then what do you mean?"

"I mean that one person may think one course best, but another person may have a different way of thinking. So. . . ."

"So you think I am a fool."

"Far from it! Haruyo-san, don't work yourself up,

please."

"Fool though I may be, I have to do my best for the happiness of my daughter. If things do not turn out as I have planned, it's just too bad. I know that everything in the world can't go exactly the way we plan it."

"Yes, I know, but I still think you must consider

Choko-san's feelings."

"I'll have Kenichi talk to her again. You keep out of it from now on."

The next time I went over there Choko asked, "Didn't Mom say something to you, Uncle-Zen?"

"Yes, she did."

"Are you on Mom's side or mine?"

"Your Mom was angry with me," I said, sparring for time. "I didn't know what it was about! Did your Dad tell you anything?"

"Yes, Dad really begged me to agree. His way wasn't the same as Mom's. But what I hate I can't bring myself

to like."

"Do you definitely dislike him, then?"

"Yes, I even abhor the name Toyozo, itself."
"Then marriage is out of the question, isn't it?"

"Isn't Mom cruel to force some one on me I despise?"
"You are between the devil and the deep blue sea," I

said lightly.

"You are the only friend on my side, just as I thought, in case things went this far."

"What do you mean?"

"I expected you would be the only man who would appreciate my point of view."

"But I can't understand it completely."

"I have a right to my own free will, haven't I?"

"Yes, of course you have. But don't you have someone you love?"

"No, not anybody at all."

"If you have, the matter would be simpler. Then you would want to continue your present status without being interrupted, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, that's right, Uncle Zen."

"Then I will help you out on that basis."

Choko put her hands on the textbook and would not let me start the lesson. She jumped up and ran out of the room. In a few minutes she came back in.

"I'll be frank with you," she said holding her head high and smiling. "I have a friend I want to marry, Uncle Zen."

"I thought so," I said sympathetically.

"Since you said you could help me, I'll tell you the truth. He's the brother of one of my school friends. He's studying philosophy at the university. Whenever I went to see Hiroko, I always talked with him. Now we have reached an understanding."

"Have you promised to marry him?"

"No, not yet, but we are in love. Hiroko has asked me to be her sister-in-law."

"What sort of a family is it?"

"His father is working for a business firm. Maybe he's a director, because they live in a big house."

"Is he the oldest son and family heir?"

"Yes, that's the trouble!"

"Tell me all about it, Choko-san," I said taking out my notebook. What I was doing was directly opposed to what Haruyo has demanded, but under the circumstances I could not help following the instruction of my heart.

## Chapter 29

### THE LAST AND BIGGEST

Soon after that I received a letter from Haruyo, forbidding me to come to her house. Although the exact wording has slipped my mind after twenty years, it said that a man who could not make a happy marriage for himself had no right to interfere with her plans for her daughter's wedding, and that I should refrain from giving

any advice to Choko.

Having no choice in the matter, I stopped visiting the Yoshidas. Although I was under the impression that they lived in Tokyo for quite a long time, in reality it was only three or four years. During the year that Haruyo had a grievance against me they moved back to Osaka. The Osaka branch office of his company had been reorganized as an affiliated independent concern, and he was appointed executive director. They left Choko in the dormitory of the Women's University and illogically entrusted her supervision to me.

Haruyo's way of doing things seemed capricious, but basically opportunism was part of her nature. She wrote me that she had no choice but to ask me to look after Choko, although she did not like me, but that a relative

was a relative.

I remember Choko often came to my house during the time she was in the dormitory but somehow can't recall whether Kiyoshi and Choko met there or not. The mention of Kiyoshi reminds me of Miss Yasui. Both Kiyoshi and Choko were born the same year. Since they both studied

at universities, they should have been in Tokyo during the

same period.

Nudged by this small doubt, I asked Kiyoshi one evening, "Don't you remember that Choko came to see me from her dormitory while you were living with me in Tokyo?"

"No, the woman visitor at that time was Miss Yasui. When I went to Tokyo, Choko-san had already graduated

and had gone back to Osaka."

"So you came after she left?"

"That's right, Uncle Zen. Miss Yasui started coming to

see you about one year after I arrived."

"Isn't it strange that you came after Choko had left? By the way, how often did you have to repeat your class in middle school?"

"I've never flunked out, Uncle Zen. I was admitted to

the Second High School at Sendai on my first try."

Kiyoshi looked displeased. However slow-witted he might have been, he never would have stayed back three times.

"Now I see, I was forgetting your high school years."
"Don't mix up my university and hers. Choko's was

directly linked with her girls' high school."

"That's it. I was under the wrong impression. Those discrepancies bothered me."

"I was wondering why Miss Yasui came before

Choko-san."

"Have you read my manuscript again?"

"Yes, I have. Didn't you have an affair with Choko-san, too?"

"Nonsense!"

"Anyway, you've made a clean breast of your secret love for Aunt Mitsuko."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha. I couldn't help myself," I said genially.

"The scene of the goblin festival was very nice. I thought how clever my uncle was to take advantage of

Tenjin merry-making. No one else would have thought of that."

"That was pure fabrication. It didn't really happen."

"You are quite a tricky writer."

"Is that so?"

"You're going to tell some more autobiographical lies, aren't you?"

"No, no more. Well, there may be one more big

confession."

"I'm looking forward to it, Uncle Zen."

"Life is full of follies. You must be careful yourself."

"I haven't done anything wrong. My life has been too good, in fact, and I regret it.

"By the way, I have a surprise, Kiyoshi."

"Is your surprise about a foreign lady who called on you several times? One with golden hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion?"

"Mn . . . let me see. I had several foreign visitors from

both schools and churches."

"You said she was blonde and beautiful."

"I see. That was Mrs. Palmer then."

"Was she a missionary?"

"Yes, and her husband was one also."

"Good! Then she was Miss Jane. No mistake! You can't deny it, can you, Uncle Zen?"

"You've trapped me again. Ha, ha, ha."

"I've read about her over and over again. You were jilted good and proper," Kiyoshi said, exulting as though he had cut off an ogre's head.

"Are you going through every chapter with a fine tooth comb? Mrs. Palmer was very beautiful, but she was one of those whom the fates envy. Her husband was killed in an accident on Mount Asama."

"How awful!"

"Just as he climbed up the crater the volcano erupted, and he was killed by a falling stone. She went back to Indianapolis with her two children. We kept up a correspondence until the war broke out," I continued. "Mr. Palmer had been following his evangelical work at Kobe and had nothing to do with the Kanto area. He went to Karuizawa for the summer, where he met with his fatal accident."

"How do you reconcile such a disaster with Christianity?"

"What do you mean?"

"That a man who came to Japan to preach the Christian gospel should be deprived of his life by an act of God called a volcanic eruption. Isn't that a contradiction?"

"It wasn't an act of God but a natural phenomenon."

"But on the back of any fire insurance policy it is stated that lightning, earthquakes, and the like are acts of God."
"Fire insurance policy? Your memory serves you right,

sometimes, Kiyoshi-san," I said, laughing.

"You are no good, Uncle Zen. Whenever I say something

serious, you make fun of me."

"Not at all. I was thinking what a clever business man you are to think of God because of an insurance policy."

"Many people lose their lives in an earthquake. Is that

an evidence of God's love?"

"Your contradiction lies in mixing up natural phenomena with acts of God. Not only Christianity but all religions belong to the age when men had no idea of cosmology but only a view of this world in the solar system. Because the earth is at its center, we cannot accept it at its face value. However, all religions are a hint or a riddle."

"By riddle, do you mean not clear?"

"That's right. You are wrong if you think Christ, Mahomet or Buddha solved all the problems of human life. The founders of religion gave us a hint and left us a riddle. That's all."

"I'm becoming interested in the problems of religion and human life. May I come to listen to your lectures on the subject, Uncle Zen?"

"That's a turn for the better. I thought you were interested only in counting other people's money. I'm glad to hear you talk this way."

"Don't take me for a fool!"

"Far from it, Kiyoshi-san. Far from it."

## Chapter 30

### A PAINTING BY SESSHU

On my way home from Shirahama, where I had been to take care of the president when he had a stroke, I dropped in on the Yoshidas in Osaka. Choko had not yet married. She must have kept refusing for three years. Far away in Tokyo there was no opportunity for me to give her any advice. In the meanwhile, her philosopher got married, which shows they had no definite understanding. Perhaps despair drove Choko to yield to her parents' pleas and consent to accept Toyozo for her husband. When Haruyo wired me, inviting me to the wedding ceremony, I was uncertain as to whether I should go or not, because I was well aware of Choko's true feelings. But I decided to go. At the reception afterwards I asked,

"Where are you going on your honeymoon, Choko?" "Gosh! How can I bring myself to go on a honeymoon

with a husband I hate," she answered indignantly.

After the death of President Arao, his position was inherited by his son, Tatsuo. I assisted in the capacity of executive director, and we got along very well. During the ten years since I had been ousted from Shirokane Gakuin I had never committed a serious indiscretion. I had built

up a good record, both officially and privately. President Arao had several times attempted to act as a go-between on my behalf but, after being enamored of that matronly beauty, Mrs. Sato, I found the quality of applicants deteriorating. This was no doubt a sign of my getting old. Among the applicants there were a widow who was a countess, the bereaved widow of a big stockbroker, and the widow of a high official in the Imperial Household. I had never desired their deceased husbands' social distinctions, but somehow the president made much of defunct titles.

"Please don't recommend any more bereaved beauties. I didn't come into this world to relieve their sorrow. Such as

I am, I am a bachelor," I said jokingly.

After that he must have decided I was pretty hardboiled,

for he never tried to be my matchmaker again.

President Arao succumbed to his second stroke some time later. He was a good-natured man and was loved by the whole company, all of whom turned out for his funeral.

I remember it was immediately after the sad event that Miss Nobuko Yasui came to see me at my house. She had been receiving a monthly allowance from Arao, but his death was so sudden that she had not been able to make any arrangement for her future.

"He gave me a picture by Sesshu,\* and that was all.

Will you look at it please, Maruo-san?"

She had brought a picture scroll (*kakemono*) with her. I was no judge of fine art but, having been inspired by the late President Arao, I knew something of the field.

At a glance I was surprised and said, "This is an

excellent work."

"He told me it was worth \\$10,000." In those days, \\$10,000 was a huge sum of money.

"Did he give it to you instead of money?"

\* Sesshu (1420-1506), originally a priest, the greatest master of India-ink painting. He went to China to study painting.

"No. He didn't like the picture hung in my parlor, so he brought this to replace it."

"Mr. Arao was a connoisseur. You'd better keep this

picture as a family treasure."

"But I cannot earn a living with only this picture. Depending on Mr. Arao, I had almost retired from my professional life. A comeback is not so easy as you think. I need some funds to support myself until I can stand on my own feet again."

"How much do you demand?"

"I don't mean to demand but to ask humbly. One piece." So saying, she held up one of her index fingers and added, "Ten thousand yen."

I asked so that I might not mistake it for ₹100,000.

Miss Yasui's demand was quite moderate. She regretted having had to make such a request because she had been too unconcerned with such matters during her patron's lifetime. I thought the late president was indeed responsible and took the matter up with Tatsuo.

"How annoying it is!" he fumed. "This would bring disgrace upon my father's name. Don't you think we could

deny it safely?"

"But you know what happened at Shirahama. Can you

turn a deaf ear to her?" I said.

"I don't mind about the money but, if I comply with her

request, Father's reputation might suffer."

"You needn't feel uneasy on that score. It is her secret, too. Give her the money and help her protect her reputation."

"How much do I have to pay her?"

"Ten thousand yen is sufficient, for she was g!ven a Sesshu worth about the same amount."

"Isn't that too much?"

"No, it is rather little. If she had demanded twenty to thirty thousand and had shouted about it, we couldn't have helped it." Mr. Arao was old, and Miss Yasui was young. Such an illicit relationship surely was not forced upon him; he must have taken the initiative in the affair. I thought it proper to levy a heavy tax on his misconduct.

The late president's son wrote a check for \\$10,000, transferred it into my account, and asked me to deliver it

in my name. He was extremely cautious.

That evening I called on Miss Yasui and handed over the check.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Maruo. You have saved my life!"

"I must ask you to please keep this transaction strictly

between ourselves."

"Yes, I understand. Is this from you?" she asked, noting my name on the check.

"No, it is from Mr. Arao's son. To protect his father's

reputation, he asked me to pay you in my name."

"Oho, ho, ho, ho. What a fine reputation he had!"

"We must pay proper respect to the dead," I said with a smile.

"Mr. Maruo, I have another favor to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"It's about the picture I left with you."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot all about it. Please take it back with you."

"No, please don't give it back to me. Buy it," she said

coaxingly.

"Buy it? But I don't want it," I protested.

"I can't keep it. Sooner or later I'll have to sell it. But if I carried it around, they would take advantage of my

poor business ability."

"It's a genuine Sesshu. You are as good as holding cash in that amount." This was a hackneyed phrase used by fine arts dealers. To show I was something of a connoiseur I mimicked them.

"Would you buy it at \\$8000? If I take it to a dealer I

shall have to part with it at that price."

"You should keep it and burn incense before it. It's a splendid keepsake in memory of the late President Arao, whom you loved so dearly."

"What a cruel remark, Maruo-san. Have you forgotten

how kind you were in the past?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"As he was president, how could I exchange his fetters for yours?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"Please do buy it, Maruo-san, or I'll make up a story!"

"What story?"

"That I was seduced by you. Ho, ho, ho, ho!" "All right, I'll buy it. Is \$\frac{4}{7}8000 enough for you?"

"Quite enough," she replied readily.

"Will you please write a receipt for me?"

The following morning, I reported to Arao that the matter was settled.

"Thank you for your trouble. When I went home yesterday a surprise was waiting for me. I had to deal with another matter of this kind." He seemed quite crestfallen.

"What was it?"

"Another one of my father's affairs. Several of my father's letters and a hanging scroll of Sesshu's were shown me as evidence."

"That has nothing to do with Miss Yasui, has it?"

"No. It was an ex-geisha, demanding \forall 30,000. We can't deny this, because she got hold of the letters as evidence."

"Did your father have a long affair with her?" I asked,

my natural curiosity aroused.

"A little longer than three years."

"If she is a geisha, she must have been well financed by your father. The geisha are shrewd. She came to make an

additional demand, I imagine."

"I don't want my sick mother to know about it. I had a hard time getting her to go away for the present, with a promise to settle the matter some other time. Will you help me find a suitable solution?"

"Let's talk over the matter later on. Did she bring a Sesshu, too?"

"Yes, she did. My father had a special liking for Sesshu."

"What kind of picture was it?" I asked. I was anxious to know, because I now owned the one Miss Yasui had.

"It's a landscape with a flock of geese flying under the

moon."

"Aren't the geese flying low near the water?"

"Yes, with the head one quite close."

"It is impossible that a master like Sesshu would have painted two identical pictures."

"It's very strange, isn't it?"

"May I go to your house on my way home to have a look at it?"

"Please do. There's something I want to talk over with

you."

On my way home I dropped in at Arao's house and had dinner with him. The picture in question I found to be exactly the same as that of Miss Yasui now in my possession.

"This is a photographic reproduction called kohitsuban!"

I said, playing the connoisseur.

"But it doesn't look like a print—maybe it's a genuine Sesshu."

"But no painter could produce two identical pictures,"
I insisted.

"From the original design the artist might have reproduced the same thing by tracing," Arao said

stubbornly.

To make it clear we agreed to call in a fine arts dealer patronized by the late president. Shortly after we telephoned, one of the dealer's assistants came over. As soon as he saw the picture, he stated positively, "Beyond all doubt, this is a kohitsuban!"

"How can you tell it from a genuine one?" Arao asked. "When the painting is mounted, it is difficult to tell. As it is a photographic print, it is a facsimile of the original. Painters are employed for the purpose. They work on it

and give finishing touches, strictly imitating the original. If you look at the back, you can see it is a print. Some master artists are said to have authenticated their fake productions on the cases containing them."

"Ignorance is bliss," I quoted.

"Yes. But we dealers are not cheated, because it's a question of profit and loss. In the case of calligraphy even laymen can determine the authenticity. A print has the same shade of black all over, while genuine calligraphy is not simple. If you look at it horizontally, you can detect a slight swelling where the writing-brush has crossed. This is

the only secret of judging, if there is one."

After all, I learned this method of judging at \\$8000. Miss Yasui did not know it was a fake when she sold it to me. I always find myself to be an easy mark for a request made by a beautiful woman. I had to reconcile myself by thinking that I had made an additional condolence dedication to the memory of the late President Arao, to whom I owe so much. This scroll picture of a flock of geese by Sesshu was doomed to be burned in an air raid in later years, so it made no difference whether it was genuine or a fake.

## Chapter 31

#### LECTURES ON CULTURE

The late president's amorous propensity was regarded as his special weakness. No one ever blamed him for it. Everybody admitted that it was just that old man's way. "A man's worth is settled when he is laid in his final resting place." Koichiro Arao was a good man. That was the consensus of all who knew him. The new president should be contented with it, I thought. But from his excessive sense

of filial piety he went a little further.

"Maruo-san, can't you think of some way to make my late father better known to everyone, especially to those in our company? Father was a self-made man, and his success should serve as an inspiration to the young men of today."

"No one speaks ill of him," I pointed out. "His escapades were known by only a few intimate friends. All is well,

and you should be thankful to leave it at that."

"But as a son I must do something for him. As you

know, he wasn't a bad man."

"Far from it. As a business man he was one of the best. There is no doubt about it. I might suggest printing the story of his life and distributing it among our employees."

"That is a good idea. I'll ask a writer I know to prepare

it."

"Ask Dr. Matsuzaki to write a preface to it," I suggested. The biography of Koichiro Arao was compiled by a literary friend of his son and published in book form with a preface by Dr. Matsuzaki. It was distributed to all the employees of the company. Even carpenters and per diem workers got a copy and were required to read it. A meeting was held in honor of the biography and its subject, and

Arao and I spoke about the late president.

Up to this point everything was all right, but Tatsuo-san was too zealous. He planned a series of moral lectures for the benefit of the employees. I was against it from the first. There were two hundred employees in all. Since most of them were university graduates, there was no necessity whatever of poking our nose into their affairs. In the business we were president and director, but as individuals there probably were many who were more able than we. We should respect their rights and let them alone. I tried to dissuade the over-zealous son, but he insisted on having a

series of moral lectures. I had to give way because he was

the president.

At the first meeting I spoke about the Chinese precept that we should not adjust our hat under an apricot tree nor step into a melon field. That was the lesson I learned from the late president. No one can be too careful about his morals. I remember referring to Confucius. The president read from his father's biography and praised his sincerity. Only about half of the employees were present.

A few days later I got a letter signed "Knowall." It

ran as follows:

You must know your lectures are a waste of time on your part as well as on ours. Please don't bother about us. Do you think our moral life is in danger?

I know where one of our moral lecturers is at night. He is at a café in the back street of Ginza, though I don't know whether he is lecturing there or not. The other lecturer, the ex-professor, frequents Miss Nobuko Yasui's house at Koenji, though I am sure that he is giving a moral lecture there.

You cannot be too careful about such matters, as you say. Please read Luke 4:23 for your information.

Sincerely Yours,

Knowall

I showed this letter to Arao, who flew into a rage and said he must find this fellow and fire him.

"What is there in Luke 4:23? Have you a Bible?"

"I don't have one here."

"That letter is most disturbing!"

Just at this moment an office girl came in.

"Mr. Maruo, there is a telephone call for you from Shirokane Gakuin."

Immediately I had the call switched to my phone and was shocked to learn of the death of Dr. Matsuzaki.

"Mr. Arao, Dr. Matsuzaki is dead!"

"Good God! What sad news!"

"He died of pneumonia. What a pity, I didn't even know he was ill." I could hardly speak. The tears were streaming

down my face.

We hurried to Shirokane. I kept blubbering on the way and, when I sat down before my benefactor, I clung to him and wept aloud. I had made it a rule to call on him as often as I could, though sometimes I had trespassed on his time. On my last visit when I called with the young president to give Dr. Matsuzaki Arao's biography, he was quite well. Looking at his friend's picture in the book, he had said, jokingly, "Koichi, my oldest friend, wait for me. Before long I shall join you." His prophecy had come true. He had joined his friend. He was suddenly seized with pneumonia and died in a few days. According to Mrs. Matsuzaki, just before breathing his last, he called out, "A great undertaking, this. Come, all my friends." The evangelization of Japan was on his mind until the last moment.

We stayed far into the night, keeping a *lich*-watch. Almost all the professors of Shirokane Gakuin attended it. I returned home in the morning and tried to sleep, but in vain. I mused on Dr. Matsuzaki and prayed for him in my own way. Just then I remembered "Knowall" and consulted the New Testament. "Physician heal thyself" were the words of Christ. We were beaten by "Knowall" and never tried to give a lecture again.

# Chapter 32

#### CROW'S NEST

There was no competition between Yoshida and me; however, both of us had reached the same goal almost abreast. I had hardly been made a director before Yoshida became one. Ten years later the presidency came to both of us at about the same time.

At fifty-two I remained unmarried and untrammeled by family ties. They said that I might be suffering a lot of inconvenience in my daily life, but I felt nothing of the sort. My household had a full number of hands. I was completely unrestricted and had my own way in everything. I considered myself more efficient than those who are tied down by wives and children. On this point I was like a soldier—work, work, work and no relaxation. But when one is accustomed to such a life, one can adapt himself to his lot.

A bachelor at thirty may be an object of compassion to others. At fifty nobody gives him a thought. By this time his friends have despaired of him. If I had been only an ordinary office worker, I would have been treated as a screwball, but as I was a president, I was made a kind of institution. I was nicknamed the "Bach President."

"You look very young, Mr. President! What is your

right age?" they would ask me.

"Neither right nor wrong. I've only one age, fifty-two!"

"Really? You look in your early forties."
"I won't stand treat for your bouquet."

"That's no flattery. It's true!"

If you feel happy when others say you look young, it is proof you are getting old. For many generations we Orientals have considered our span of life to be fifty. I had already passed that limit. I thought I was an exception, but I noticed striking changes coming over my friends. One's good health sometimes helps one to appear younger. People with weak constitutions age quickly. My friend at the self-culture lectures (my predecessor) was three or four years younger than I; nevertheless, he had lost nearly all his hair.

"Tell me your secret of rejuvenation, Maruo," he always said in an envious tone.

At Dr. Matsuzaki's request I had employed several alumni of Shirokane Gakuin, among them Ito of Kagoshima as manager of the general affairs section. This fellow, however old he might become, was a perennial student in his character. He had never changed a bit as far as his intelligence and tastes were concerned. Regardless of my present position as a director of the company, he would address me, "Hey, you, Maruo. . . ." Even after I was made president he still did not pay me proper respect. Because he was older at school he still felt he could exercise the right of seniority.

"Hey, Maruo, now that you are the president I want you

to do me a favor."

"What is it?"

"Raise my pay as much as you can."

"Good!"

"For my part, you know, I would do anything for you. Senior may become junior, and junior may become senior. That cannot be helped. We have to take things as they are."

Ito was a peculiar character. Nevertheless, I had employed him when he was out of a job, and now he had the nerve to demand a raise. He was very faithful to me, however. I believe he should have resorted to physical force to protect me.

"Hey! Maruo, my wife and I want you to do us a favor. Hire our daughter as your typist!"

I had been the president of the company for about a

year when this request was made.

"Do you have a daughter that grown-up?"

"Yes, we do. She graduated from Tokyo Women's University and now has nothing to do. You'll be surprised when you see her."

"Why?"

"She is so beautiful that you can hardly believe she is my daughter. She was born to my family by mistake, I'm sure. And she is clever, too. Please take her on until she

gets married."

Because of the late President Arao's precaution, only a plain-looking girl was assigned to me. Several girls came and went during my director days, but all were so homely that none had left any impression on me. Just at this moment, as my typist, a certain Miss Platter Face, had handed in her resignation for family reasons, I gave Miss Kaori Ito her job. As Ito had predicted, I was really surprised at her looks. Hers was a blonde beauty that was rare in Japan.

I was told that company presidents in foreign countries often hold their typists or secretaries on their laps. I could not do that with Miss Ito because my male assistant was watching. However, when I went out I often took her with

me in his place to carry my briefcases.

"Come with me, Miss Kaori, my old body needs young escort."

At other times I professed myself to be young, but I

could assert my age when necessity called for it.

I enjoyed talking with Ito's pretty daughter in the car. She was somewhat like Miss Jane, so I could revel in calling up images of my American days. A president is a very busy person but has the freedom of driving around on business. We drove to Enoshima, Kamakura, Ohmiya Park, Tsuchiura and even as far as Mito.

"Your father is a nuisance, Kaori-san," I said one day in the car.

"What is wrong with him, Mr. Maruo?"

"He was my schoolmate and one or two years my senior. He still treats me like a schoolboy, calling me, 'Hey, you, Maruo.'"

"Dear me!"

"When no one is around, I don't mind, but even in the presence of other company presidents or directors he still says 'Hey, you, Maruo,' and puts me in an awkward position."

"It is true that he has no common sense."

"Will you give him a hint about it?"

"Of course, I will, Mr. Maruol"

"But don't tell him I said anything. He might even call me Zenzaburo. Maruo-san will be all right."

"I'm sorry he's so careless."

Kaori's timely warning got immediate results. Ito began calling me Maruo-san (Mr. Maruo) or President-san.

"Kaoril" I called her one day as she was leaving for

her lunch hour.

"Yes, sir!"

"Thanks to your help, your father has begun to pay

me more respect."

"I'm glad to hear it. I told my mother that Dad embarrasses me when he talks to the president. Then Mother took it up with him."

"Your father is naive, that's all. He's really a good man."

"He is good natured and not much else."

"Does he play 'the bravest samurai in Sasshu Kagoshima' once in a while?"

"Yes, he does! Dear me! Do you know that number?"
About six months later my beautiful typist was lured away by the screen industry and became a movie star. She was replaced by another beauty, giving glamor to my office, but this one, too, soon left after marrying one of the

office staff. After that beauty after beauty took over the typist job. It was a far cry from the days of old, when homely had followed homely in exasperating succession. My typists now were always stunning looking and therefore hard to keep.

Since I always had a pretty typist I was envied by many. The time came when the foreign custom of cuddling the office girl on the lap was imported into this country.

Simple-minded Ito came into my office one day and said, "Mr. President, while watching your face I remembered an English word that I learned at Shirokane Gakuin."

"What in the world is it?"

"It's crow's feet!"

"Crow's feet? What does that mean?"

"Wrinkles at the tail of the eye that appear when one is getting old."

"Do I have crow's feet?"

"Yes, you have!"

"It's you that have them. They really do look like the feet of crows."

"It's you, Mr. President. No one notices his own."
"Is that right? I can feel them with my fingers."

"Your hair has turned gray, too! I never believed there was gray hair, but the mixture of black and white makes the hair look exactly gray."

"I admit I've some gray at my temples," I said

reluctantly.

"Your hair is receding, too."

"So is yours."

"No, I mean you, Mr. President!"

"You can't see your own."

"We're the pot calling the kettle black, aren't we? Everybody thinks of himself as an exception, and that idea helps him hold his head up in public."

"Do I look that old?"

"Everybody tells you you look young, but that's flattery. I tell you the truth because I've known you since we were boys."

"Don't compare my present with my boyhood," I

protested.

"Even apart from your boyhood. . . ."

"Because you are getting old, you're trying to make me believe I'm old, too," I insisted.

"May I ask, Mr. President, if you ever hold your typist's

hand?"

"Yes, I don't deny it!"
"Does she run away?"

"No, she doesn't. She isn't scared of me!"

"That's the very proof you are getting old. When young girls feel safe with you, watch out. You are an old man."

"How about you?"

"Even my wife feels safe with me! There's no hope for me!"

The bravest man in Sasshu Kagoshima was in low spirits.

## Chapter 33

### THE BIG SCYTHE

According to Western imagination, death is a hideouslooking skeleton in a black robe holding an out-sized scythe under his arm. He reaps with it, and woe to those who fall under his blade.

About the time I became aware of my crow's feet, I began to feel the absolute power of death. No one can escape him. I frequently received a black-edged obituary

notice. Year after year the same blossoms come and go, but men and women are not the same, so a poet sang. My elders died one after the other. Among the number were President Arao and Dr. Matsuzaki. Not a few of my contemporaries passed away, too. When a man exceeds fifty, unless he is especially robust, he will find a weak point or two in some part of his body, and the slightest strain will throw him in the way of the skeleton's scythe.

Among my relatives, my elder brother, Tsunejiro, was the first to go. I owed so much to this brother and thought so much of him. Because he had backed me in my plan to study in America, he was very pleased to see me getting on

in the world.

"Zenzaburo, if anyone bullies you in school," he used to say, "tell me at once and I'll see that he is taken care of."

He always kept this protective attitude toward me.

If I had left my problem of Mitsuko to his discretion, the complication could have been avoided. On the other hand, if that had happened, I would have ended my life as a middle-school teacher. By now I would have found myself leading a very modest life on a teacher's pension somewhere in the suburbs of Tsuruoka, growing vegetables and feeding chickens. The Reluctant Bachelor would not have been written.

I might appraise Brother Tsunejiro's life in one short sentence: he was a man of good fortune. Having attracted the love of the Number 1 beauty and heiress in the village and married her, he was blessed with many children and led a happy married life. He had nothing more to wish for. His only complaint was his premature baldness. Since he had gone so far as to clip a guest's hair after getting drunk, he became all the more sensitive about his hair.

As soon as we exchanged how-do-you-do, he would say, "Well, how do you find me? Pretty bad, am I not?" touching

his bald head.

"You look just the same as before!" I would reply.

"I'm pleased to hear you say so even out of politeness.

Only a few days ago I bawled out a young insurance salesman."

Every time I met him he had a story or two to tell about his bald head.

"What made you so angry?"

"He came with no hat on, holding his briefcase and looking the picture of sloppiness. I'd say his manners were bad, wouldn't you?"

"Well, the young people in my company are all like

that. No-hat is a kind of fashion now in Tokyo."

"Well, that fashion doesn't suit me. He needn't have made a show of his hair. I asked him if it wasn't a slap at my bald head!"

"I hate to say it, but that sounds neurotic on your part,

Tsunejiro.'

"It stung me to the quick!"

"Well, you'll have to be careful."

Indeed, this pent-up rancor, given vent under the influence of alcohol, would probably become dangerous

as time went by, I thought.

"Being a brash sort of fellow, he said that he had such a fine head of hair that he needn't conceal it from the public. So I retorted that he might be proud of his hair but he couldn't beat cats and dogs which have hair all over their bodies."

"You are just the same as ever, Tsunejiro."

"I sent him away, saying I wouldn't pay an insurance premium to any fellow who turned up hatless."

The incident must have been quite fresh in his mind.

He told it to me excitedly.

The reason I repeat such trifles about him is that this was the last time I saw him. For those living far apart, a meeting may mean life's parting. I would never have imagined that the skeleton with his scythe was lurking about us then. We talked as though many happy days were ahead of us. When he asked me how I thought he looked, I

answered that he was still looking young, which pleased him.

"You look young, too, Zenzaburo," he said.

"I fancied myself young looking, but I know I'm hopeless. I've found crow's-feet."

"What are crow's feet?"

"It's this." I pointed with my finger.

"The wrinkles at the corner of the eye? Never mind about them. You are still young."

"You are young, too. You are old only on top of your

head."

"I believe I am. I don't feel any change except my head. Kosuke is old only on the head, too. This is our hereditary drawback."

"You two might have inherited your bald heads from

Father at that."

"Though the same age as Kosuke, Sagara has become terribly old looking. I was surprised to see him in town the other day. He looked a perfect mask of the old man in a Noh play, with wrinkles all over, not to mention crow's-feet."

"He looks really old."

"He isn't bald, but his hair is snow white. How long ago was it?"

"Was what?"

"That you said, 'You shall pay for it, Sagara!'"

"Let's forget that," I said.

"By the way, Mitsuko is weak, I hear. I haven't seen her for ages. Do you drop in to see her every time you come home?"

"Yes, I do, out of politeness."

"You awoke to find it a dream, Zenzaburo. But you've profited by your sorrow. If you had married Mitsuko, you would have been contented with a small success."

"Small success or big, I don't care. It all happened long

ago."

Whenever I visited the hillside village, I spent the night with Tsunejiro. We talked again over cups of sake in the

evening. Tsunejiro's wife was very hospitable.

"The other day I had a bright idea. Do you know why people in olden times hurriedly retired from active life when they reached fifty?" Tsunejiro began to speak fluently. He was always convivial over good rice wine.

"That was because their life span was limited to fifty."

"That may be so in part, but I think it was because oldtimers wore topknots on their head. When they became bald they couldn't do up their hair any longer. In the age of topknots, if one couldn't be in style, how miserable he must have felt. If he found himself unable to look as average people do, he must have felt that all hope was lost."

It seemed that Tsunejiro couldn't get away from the

subject of bald heads.

"I see, he must have felt awkward to present himself

before his lord, too."

"That's it! Without hair he could no longer be faithful to his lord, and some quick-tempered samurai must have committed harakiri."

"I hardly think so."

"When a samurai found himself to be of no use to his lord, he had no recourse but to resign as head of the family. Those who forsook home life and became Buddha's disciples were called priests, and others who preferred to stay at home, tonsured, and give up worldly desires, were called lay monks. Among the latter there probably were many who shaved their remaining hair off, since it could no longer be done into topknots."

"On this point we should be grateful to the present age. Sexagenarians and septuagenarians can be presidents and

directors with their ostrich-egg-like heads."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"By the way, Tsunejiro, this time I'd like to ask your advice. I want to know what you think of my plan."

"What's that?"

"Being recommended by some of my colleagues, I'm going to run for the Diet . . . what's the matter with you, Tsunejiro?"

"Oh-h-h-h."

With a deep sigh Tsunejiro started falling on his face with his eyes wide open. I caught him and held him up. His wife rushed in and tried to help him up.

"What's wrong with you?" she cried. He couldn't utter

a sound.

The village doctor diagnosed it as apoplectic stroke. A registered physician in the city was sent for, but nothing could be done. He was in a coma until the next morning. He died without regaining consciousness. I had come home to obtain the support of my fellow townspeople in my campaign, but it turned out that it was just in time to see Tsunejiro once more before he died.

Once defeated, twice successful and then purged was the brief account of my political career. It also was part of my indiscreet life, but as it had nothing to do with the history of my heart, I am not going to tell about it. Right after I returned to Tokyo following the funeral service of

Tsunejiro, I received a cable from Kosuke:

"Mitsuko Sagara died this morning."

Then after another two years Haruyo was the next victim of the old man with the scythe. She died of uterine cancer. She had once been pronounced cured after an operation, but a relapse followed a year later. In the hope of having an operation by the best doctor in Japan, she came to Tokyo. A famous surgeon at St. Luke's Hospital, who once saved a premier from a bullet wound, operated on Haruyo. She barely managed to survive the ordeal and soon afterward died.

### Chapter 34

#### THE LAW OF CAUSATION

During Haruyo's unfortunate hospitalization all the Yoshidas came to Tokyo. I had the opportunity of renewing my friendship with Choko, "the Kiyokata painting." She lived in Ashiya with that family-selected husband of hers, Toyozo. As they had two children, I thought their marriage was working out successfully. It was quite the reverse, I discovered.

"Our family is hopeless, Zenzaburo-kun," Yoshida confided. "If Haruyo dies, what will become of us!"

"It has been nearly ten years—no, over ten years—hasn't it," I said, counting the time since their Tabata days.

"You're right! My first grandchild, Toyoichiro, is now

ten years old."

"Since they have two children, I wonder why they

couldn't be happy together?"

"Choko can't force herself to like him. I think divorce is the only solution for both of them, but Toyozo won't leave her. He's crazy about her."

"Why is he so foolish as to hold on to her when she

hates him so much!"

"I don't know! He is a damn fool, I think!" said Yoshida

in disgust.

Poor Toyozo. He made a mistake in not leaving Choko long ago, as soon as he realized that she did not love him. It was not sensible of him to have married her when he knew she hated him. Even after ten years, he still had not

made her love him. He was a disgrace to the male sex, I

thought.

"When I think of their two children," Yoshida went on, "I feel helpless. If she divorces him, and I cross his name out of the family register, it will be terrible. Washing one's dirty linen in public is something I've never liked."

I can appreciate your worries. The people in our country town are narrow-minded and provincial," I said.

"We knew from the first she didn't love him, but we didn't realize her dislike was so extreme. We should have paid some attention to what you said."

"I never said anything," I demurred. "I only listened to her objections. I must say she knew what she wanted and what she didn't want."

"Didn't she have someone else in mind to marry?"
"Yes, but it's too late to talk about that," I replied.

"Giving daughters in marriage and taking young men into the family for daughters are daily events in Japan, and things go on smoothly everywhere. Why is it that such a complication should arise in my family?" Yoshida said woefully.

"You and Haruyo are responsible for that. You pampered

Choko too much, bringing her up."

"That's touching us on the raw, Zenzaburo-kun. We know we made a mistake."

"You needn't be in too big a hurry to acknowledge it. It's destiny."

"Destiny?"

"Maybe the law of causation, or cause and effect, is better."

"What causation do you mean?"

"If you promise not to become angry, I'll tell you," I said cautiously.

"Don't worry. Just tell me what it is!"

"You two, with full knowledge of our love, separated Mitsuko and me. And now your daughter is separated from the one she loved and living an unhappy life. Wouldn't you say there exists the law of causation?"

"Mn-mn."

"Mitsuko is gone, but the memory of her is always with me. You must realize that my life has not been and is not now an easy one."

"I quite appreciate your hard lot."

"Choko's case is not as simple as you think, or she would not be so obstinate in detesting her husband."

"You mean to say it's because of the law of causation?"

"If the same two people discuss the same kind of problem, who can tell they won't repeat the same mistake?"

"I see. It may be a result of some sort of causation at that. Haruyo is hopelessly ill, and Choko's home is destined

to break up!"

Yoshida, unable to stand his inner agony, tore his hair. Haruyo was in good spirits while under sedation. In Tokyo, she didn't have as many friends as in Osaka, so I went to see her every day.

"Zen-san, before long I shall not be able to talk with

you like this," Haruyo said one day.

I was at a loss as to what to say. If I said she would recover soon, she would know I was lying.

"Don't lose heart!" I said cheerfully. They were the only

encouraging words I could say to her.

"Choko says she is happiest when she is talking with you, Zen-san."

"I like to talk with her, too."

"Please continue to love her," Haruyo begged.

"Of course I will!"

"Please stand by her if she needs you."

"Naturallly."

"Yoshida will remarry after my death, so. . . ."
"Don't worry about such an unlikely thing."

"I feel so sorry for my poor Choko, I. . . .

"Please rest now and don't get excited, Haruyo-san."

"I was too weak-minded. Since she didn't love him, I could have refused him. In the end, I had to consider Yoshida's sense of duty toward his relatives, so I finally decided to have them marry for a time just to save Yoshida's face and. . . ."

"Can you talk so long?"

"I'm all right, Zen-san. Come closer."

"Like this?"

"That's right. I can talk more easily. It's painful if I turn even slightly."

"I'm afraid you're becoming too tired, Haruyo."

"How far had I gotten? Yes. . . . after being married for a while, she might divorce him. With this understanding, we went ahead with the wedding plans. But just as soon as she married him she became pregnant."

"That meant she didn't entirely hate him, didn't it?"

"No, it was a sort of passionate defiance of us. After she had the second child, she had herself sterilized."

"Did she, really?"

"Toyozo is a fool, to stick to her in spite of being detested."

"Doesn't he realize that?"

"He should know it well enough, as she nags him constantly. But he is too good-natured and seems to be hoping for her to change."

"How sad it is for both of them."

"Toyozo had to endure it because he was to blame for it, but poor Choko! I don't know what to do about her!" Haruyo hid her face in her hands, but the tears of sorrow and regret coursed through her fingers and wet the bed linen.

Leaving her two children in the care of a maid, Choko came to Tokyo to be with her sick mother. Every time I had been in Osaka I had dropped in on the Yoshidas. Choko lived in Ashiya, however, and I hadn't seen her for the past ten years.

"Don't your children miss you?" I asked.

"No, they are used to my being gone because I seldom stay at home."

"You are a selfish wife, aren't you?"

"A typical Ashiya Madame, am I not?"

"Do you smoke?"

"Yes, I started smoking before I was aware of it. Do you still smoke cigars, Uncle Zen?"

"Both cigars and cigarettes."

"Turkish? You used to like that blend. I remember the days at Tabata."

"Ten years have gone by, but you are as young as ever,

Choko!"

"I am not old enough yet to look older. But I'd say you are a well-preserved uncle."

"Thank you, my dear." It was so pleasant to talk over

old times.

"Uncle!"

"What is it?"

"Am I not getting more and more like her?"
"Like whom?" I pretended not to understand.

"Still the sly one, aren't you?"

"Oh, you mean the Kiyokata painting?"

"Yes, I do."

"You know how sad I still feel that Mitsuko is gone!"
"Well, I am heartbroken to think Mother is going to follow her."

"What a tragedy!"

Once at the patient's bedside Choko said, "Komori, an actor of the New School, is staying in this hospital."

"Is that so? What is wrong with him, I wonder?"

"He is suffering from Bright's disease, I hear. He has been laid up in this hospital for some time, though I found it out only today."

"I may go and see him."

\*Ashiya Madame, a representative of rich, idle women. Ashiya, near Kobe, is a rich people's section.

"Do you know him, Uncle Zen?"

"Yes, I do. The former president patronized the New School actors, so I know all of them."

"His ward is just above this one."

"Let's go and see him. Would you like to go with me, Choko-san?"

"With pleasure."

Hearing this, Haruyo said, "Choko, you will make Komori mistake you for your uncle's mistress."

To this day I don't understand why she said that.

After that, whenever we met, Choko talked about plays. True to her word, she seldom stayed at home. She never missed seeing the month's play, whether at the New School or at Kabuki-za.

"I like Aoyagi the best among the New School actors," Choko said one day.

"Aoyagi? Something of a dandy, isn't he?"

"Above all, I like his voice. It's enchanting to hear him on the stage."

"He does have a beautiful voice."

"Will you introduce me to him some day?"

"Suppose you should fall in love with him, that is, if I introduced the Ashiya Madame to the actor?"

"I want to fall in love."

"Why?"

"Because life is too dull!"

Choko at thirty had become a desperate woman.

# Chapter 35

#### ON THE SHELF

If ever there was a supreme fool, it was I when I made up my mind to enter politics. I was born with some literary talent which I might have used. I might have done well, too, if I had chosen a career in philosophy. If I had stayed in business it would have been understandable, but I was foolish enough to think that I could become a successful

politician.

It was partly due to my sense of duty to others, but mostly to my own avarice, that I turned to politics. Although I believed I had a thorough knowledge of life, in reality I was still somewhat gullible. I knew that the nation was beginning to follow an evil course but, I thought, if things went as I planned, I could grasp millet with sticky hands—make a fortune at a bound. Deep within me, as within others, my thievish instinct got the upper hand. Looking back, we can clearly see Japan's road to destruction, but every fool is wise after the event.

To me the purge was heaven's dispensation, for now my comfortable retirement gave me much time for reading. The Chinese believed that doing nothing is the state of noblemen. I had become a nobleman at a bound. Thanks to my past experience, I could teach the younger generation with one hand tied behind my back. I thought it a most perfect and satisfactory life, but all of a sudden something

happened to make me feel hard up for money.

Choko, the Kiyokata beauty, asked me for a loan of

¥1,200,000. Ten years had passed since Haruyo's death. Yoshida was dead, too. Choko had recently divorced Toyozo, I knew. She asked me for the loan under the

pretext of telling me about her long-desired divorce.

Yoshida should have left quite a fortune, but under the present depreciation of currency after the war, the property she inherited must have been reduced considerably. I could appreciate that because of my own circumstances. No longer having a breadwinner, Choko wanted to try operating a café. Although she was forty-three now, she was full of self confidence.

"I shall be the manager," she wrote, "and shall hire a few beautiful girls to attract customers. I've found a suitable shop for sale. The price is \\$\frac{1}{2},800,000. I can finance \\$\frac{600,000}{600,000} of that. Please lend me the balance, \\$\frac{1}{2},200,000. Your credit is good for this amount, Uncle Zen. The shop is located near Dotonbori, the busiest center of Osaka. I'm sure it will

prosper." So the letter ended.

Under present depreciation, we roughly estimate the price of a commodity by multiplying that of former times by a hundred. One yen of old is \(\frac{\pmathbf{T}}{100}\) now, so \(\frac{\pmathbf{T}}{1,200,000}\) is worth only \(\frac{\pmathbf{T}}{12,000}\) of old times. Miss Yasui's Sesshu cost \(\frac{\pmathbf{T}}{10,000}\). I could have easily lent her \(\frac{\pmathbf{T}}{12,000}\) before the war. However, \(\frac{\pmathbf{T}}{1,200,000}\), which now has the same purchasing power, was more than I could manage. When I thought about my inability to raise this sum, I felt very bitter about the purge. If I had still been in business, \(\frac{\pmathbf{T}}{12,000}\) would have been inconsequential.

For a very special reason, I was duty bound to help her, and that was why she came to me for help. I vainly thought about every conceivable means of raising the money. I tried to answer but, finding it too much trouble, I gave up and decided to send her a wire. To send condolences a wire saves a lot of trouble and is more effective. I jot it down: "Am not same as before the purge cannot accommodate

please appreciate Zen."

Actually there was no need to hurry. There is an old

saying that "Bad news travels fast." My wire was no exception. What pitiful circumstances I'm in not to be able to lend her only \frac{\pi}{12,000}! Leaning on a charcoal burner, I was lost in thought when Kiyoshi came in and asked, "What did Choko-san say, Uncle Zen?"

"Twelve thousand yen," I murmured.

"Are you hard up for \for \for \for \text{12,000?}" Kiyoshi looked at the desk and yawned.

"You've been snooping again!"

"No, I haven't. When I came in a few minutes ago to make a report, it caught my eye."

"So you saw the telegram?"

"Yes, if it's only \forall 12,000 I can help you."

"But it is the old \( \frac{1}{2},000. \) It's \( \frac{1}{2},\tilde{2}00,000 \) now. Can you help me with a loan for that much? I should have remembered you are a banker."

"That's too sarcastic, isn't it, Uncle Zen!" Kiyoshi continued. "I am no longer just a wage earner. I'm a managing

director now."

"Is that so? Since when?"

"Only today. I came to tell you about it a little while

ago."

"Congratulations! Since you work for a bank, you should be in management! It's really good news!" Remembering my own exultation over promotions in the past, I was delighted to hear of Kiyoshi's good fortune.

"I'm a middle-aged man now!"

"You are forty-three, the same age as Choko. I was made a director at your age. You'll have to get busy!"

"If you were the uncle you used to be, I would have

your help in reaching the top of the ladder."

"And here I am in need of \foatin 12,000."
"Why does Choko-san need \foatin 1,200,000?"

"She wants to buy a café. She has at last divorced Toyozo."

"Dear mel"

"What a miserable life hers has been."

"It was a selfish life, I'd say. There's no use in your taking pity on her, Uncle Zen."

"Why?"

"You loved her because she looks like Aunt Mitsuko, but I actually dislike her. She has a lover, I'm sure."

"I doubt it!"

"She must feel guilty," Kiyoshi said.

"There may have been some reason, or she wouldn't have disliked him so much," I concluded.

"Hasn't she been somewhat abnormal from the

beginning?" Kiyoshi persisted in his line of reasoning.

"She was an extremely selfish girl. Haruyo was wrong to pamper her. Moreover, she is too vain."

"You are responsible for that, too, Uncle Zen, calling her

the 'Kiyokata beauty'."

"Since you've read my manuscript, I'll have to plead guilty."

At times I found Kiyoshi's snooping irritating, but I

didn't really mind his seeing what I wrote.

"Have you ever seen the daughter of Sangokuya at Hamanoyu?"

"No, never."

"She's a beautiful girl. She is like Choko-san and Aunt Mitsuko, too. She is sometimes out of her mind. Her husband was one of my old classmates, but he has been dead for a long time. Even mental derangement seems to reflect the spirit of the age. She claims the Emperor is her lover."

"Isn't that a reflection on the Emperor?" I asked.

"She says she would marry the Emperor if only he were a commoner, but that he is too old-fashioned to change."

"She is great, isn't she? What she says makes more sense

sometimes than the professors' teaching."

"Doesn't Choko's personality fall into the category of megalomania?"

"I honestly don't know."

"Anyhow, that type is destined to be unfortunate. Sangokuya's daughter looks like Aunt Mitsuko, too."

"I'll have to go and see her some day."

"To satisfy your unusual taste?"

"Is she at the hotel reception desk even though she's out of her mind?"

"She is in the new hotel building. She is not much of a lunatic. So you may find a good friend in her, Uncle Zen."

I let him have his little joke.

# Chapter 36

### MY LAST FOLLY

I do not remember the first anniversary of Haruyo's death, but on the third I went to Osaka partly on business. By the way, I must say, to Yoshida's credit, that he remained a widower the rest of his life in spite of Haruyo's prediction. Nevertheless, because he was living as a widower, his life may have been shortened. One night he had a heart attack while asleep and was found dead the next morning. The maid and the old woman servant were downstairs, so nobody knew when he breathed his last. Following his death, my eldest brother, Kosuke (Kiyoshi's father), died of pneumonia. Death's toll was increasing every year.

When it comes to the observance of the third anniversary of a death, tears are usually absent. After having the memorial service at the Buddhist Temple we had a party at a teahouse. The departed soul having been a merry one, we thought it better to make merry to console her spirit. Everyone gave a performance of his speciality. Choko did

a Noh dance and Yoshida sang Obako.

"Every time I used to sing Obako, it made Haruyo angry," he said. As usual, I stayed at the Dojima Hotel. After the memorial service I tackled my business and stayed a few days longer. Choko telephoned me from Ashiya to ask when I was leaving. I couldn't believe my ears when she said she was going with me to Tokyo. We met at the station and took the morning express.

"What are you going to Tokyo for, Choko-san?"

"For pleasure!"

"What a butterfly you are!"

"My dancing teacher will put on a show at the Nihonbashi Club. I'm going to applaud her performance."

"Do you dance, too?"

"I am not that reckless!" she answered quickly.
"You are a good judge of your skill!" I teased.
"You shouldn't tell me that" Chake gried possible.

"You shouldn't tell me that," Choko cried peevishly.

"Will you stay at the hotel with your dancing teacher

in Tokyo?"

"I intended to stay at the Sanno Hotel but couldn't reserve a room. That's one reason I came with you, Uncle Zen. Will you let me stay in your house until I get a room at the hotel?"

"You may stay as long as you wish, though we can't do

anything special for you.'

"That's all right. I don't expect any extra attention."

"But the trouble is, I planned to change at Numazu and stop over at Yugawara (hot spring resort) for a rest before I go home. I'll telegraph Yugawara and cancel my reservation."

"Don't do that. I'll stay at Yugawara with you, Uncle

Zen."

"Won't you be late for the show?"

"No, I don't mind!"

"Then please stay with me."

On the train we talked about our Tabata days. Though we had met often at the bedside of her mother, we had not felt comfortable in the presence of the patient. During the ten hours on the train we discussed our common hobby—literature.

At Yugawara I regularly put up at the Nakanishi. Having no one waiting for me, I usually stayed overnight on my way back from Kansai.

"There are so many hills and brooks, it reminds me of Atsumi," Choko said in the car. Atsumi is a hot spring

resort in our native province.

"That's one reason why I always stay here on my way home from Osaka. But I never dreamed I would come here with Kiyokata's painting."

"I hate for you to say that!"

"Why?"

"You are thinking of Aunt Mitsuko."

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are, I know you better than you know yourself."

"Nonsense!"

After a bath and dinner we went out for a walk.

"Uncle Zen!"

"Yes."

"I have so many things to talk over with you, things that no one but a dear uncle like you could appreciate."

"Tell me later, Choko-san."
"How happy I am with you!"

"We are in the same boat, so to speak."

"You are always right, Uncle Zen."

We had a long, intimate talk. Choko was completely dissatisfied with her home life.

"I wish Toyozo would die!" she cried passionately.

"That's a little too extreme, isn't it?"

"I want a man whom I can love with all my heart."

"Is that what you are thinking of right now?" I asked dumbfounded.

"I hate him! I hate him! I hate him! When I can't stand

it any longer, I leave the house. That's why I'm here now."

"What a pitiful life you're leading."

"You think Toyozo is easy-going and modest, but he is really nothing of the kind. He is very bossy. He thought that once we were married he could dominate me. I detest that attitude. Are all men like that?"

"I don't know."

"I hate him, absolutely hate him, and have ever since we were married. It has been terrible!"

"Aren't you susceptible to auto-suggestion?" "What do you mean by that, Uncle Zen?"

"If he had not been forced on you by your parents, and you had married under ordinary circumstances, you might have been satisfied with him. After all, he is a good man."

"How heartless you are, Uncle Zen. With your simple

logic!"

"Men are by nature almost identical. There are only insignificant differences between two men in choosing a husband. The bird that you missed catching looks nicer. You know this is true."

"That theory works the same with women. How dare you tell me such a fairy tale? Aren't you a bachelor because you lost Aunt Mitsuko?"

"Not necessarily for that reason only."
"You can't fool me. I know everything!"

"What a pity! My lecture will not do you any good."

"My parents were wrong. If they had told me their real intention from the beginning, I might have been prepared. It was like a plot. When Toyozo came up from the country to live with us as a gatekeeper, I thought he was an ordinary houseboy. Both Father and Mother treated him as such. It was no wonder I took him for one."

"Your father told me that was his mistake. Did Toyozo

know about their plan?"

"I'm sure he did. He was adopted into our family on that condition!"

"Your parents may have thought that there was no use

telling you because you were a child."

"Yes, they may have. Anyway it seemed like a trap to me, keeping me in the dark and suddenly imposing him on me saying, 'This is your husband.'"

"Such instances are common in our society, and in most

cases everything turns out well."

"Well, there was no happy ending to my story," Choko said sadly.

"If you can't become reconciled, you will be the loser."
"There's no question of loss or gain!" Choko averred.

"Of course, you are right, my dear." Try as I might, I could not console her, because she knew my weakness. One who is unlucky in love cannot very well advise another unhappy soul.

"It was brutal of Mother. You were a victim of her

cruelty, yourself, weren't you, Uncle Zenzaburo?"

"Yes, I used to have the same bitter feeling toward her."
"When she went home for my birth, Mother succeeded in getting Aunt Mitsuko married. You know that."

"Yes, I know! Mitsuko-san might have waited longer, if

Haruyo hadn't over-persuaded her."

"I wasn't over-persuaded. I was forced."
"Crying over spilt milk won't help."

"But Uncle Zen, aren't you happy tonight?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you can be with me. I realize I'm just a substitute for Aunt Mitsuko."

"I'm happy, for the sake of the Kiyokata beauty herself."

"Then I am satisfied, for you are also like him."

"Like whom?"

"My college sweetheart."

"Are you still thinking of him?"

"He'll always be part of my heart, just as you will, Uncle Zen."

"You amaze me, Choko-san."

"How can I forget him. I really loved him."

I patted her gently on the back. "Poor girl!"

Men are apt to rationalize their actions more sensibly than women. We interpreted the night at Yugawara as a retribution of the law of causation. The equivalent two evils that outlived the evil doer, Haruyo—one dark and the other light—had attracted each other according to the positive and negative principles of Chinese philosophy. With the evil-doer's memorial service as a starting point, we two were now united in our effort to change our unfortunate fate.

Our love affair began with our philosophical deduction. Choko accompanied me to Tokyo, stayed with me ten days and left for home—if not a wiser, certainly not a sadder woman. Then she began writing passionate letters to me. I

wrote love letters in the president's office.

The notice "President now on trip in Kansai" was frequently posted on the bulletin board. Choko came to Tokyo as often as she could, which was quite often. We were happy when we were together. I felt as though I were fresh out of college. Choko became an undergraduate again. I was over sixty, and she was on the sunny side of forty. We couldn't help smiling when we thought that at our age we should have known better. Among my many indiscreet affairs, this one lasted the longest—almost four years—until at last the waves on the Pacific began raging. Suddenly, Choko stopped writing. I went to Osaka on the pretext of business and found her emaciated. Because she had suffered from a disease of the chest when she was a young girl, she now seemed almost on the point of death.

"Uncle Zen, I may not live much longer."
"You look weak! Are you feverish?"

"Yes, I have a slight fever in the evening."

"You must take good care of yourself. I have never seen

you looking so ill."

Because she was vain about her looks, it nearly drove her crazy to have anyone tell her she didn't look well. I knew this, but she looked so sick that I couldn't help telling her. "This is a sad disillusionment!"

"How selfish you are, Uncle Zen!"

"No one knows which of us is."

"I understand now why Aunt Mitsuko turned you down, or didn't wait for you, rather."

"All your relatives know how selfish you are, Choko."

Ever since the night at Yugawara we had had disputes. Since we were both egoists, neither of us would give in to the other.

"You didn't answer my last letter, so I came down to see you. You must know that a trip is not easy nowadays."

"There you go blaming me again! When I'm ill, you can't expect me to be at my best. You're in a bad humor."

"No, I'm not."

"I've burned all of your letters. I didn't want my children to read them after I'm gone."

"That's understandable, Choko-san."

"How many letters were there, can you guess?"

"No, I can't."

"Over three hundred! You've written quite a lot, haven't you?"

"It's hard to realize I've written as many as that during

the past three—no—four years."

"Mine were about half that many, I think." There was a half smile on Choko's face.

"Maybe one third. You encouraged me to write, but you didn't write yourself so often, Choko-san."

"Burn them, please, Uncle Zen."

"No, I won't."

"Why won't you?"

"I want to keep them in memory of a selfish woman."

"Then I will go to Tokyo and burn them some day."

"You are clever but heartless."

"I am tired of playing at love."

"So am I."

"Let's give it up."

"Let's do."

"Burn the letters!"
"No, I won't!"

After a while fire began to fall all over Japan. Having been burned out of my house, I went home. Choko and her rented house at Ashiya were safe, but her house at Osaka was burned. Choko never wrote to me again after our last meeting. Under these circumstances I was very anxious to lend her the \\$\Pm\$1,200,000 she now requested, but it was beyond my power. I sent a polite refusal by wire and the next day I returned the letters I had received from her (there were more than a hundred of them) which were rescued from my library.

Now the story has come to an end. I started at the beginning of fall and now it is the middle of winter. My province is buried under snow from December to March. The snow is especially heavy this year. Several days ago I went to take part in Sagara Masanobu's funeral service, which was conducted during a heavy snowfall.

Nearly all the people in this story have now left the land

of the living.

I am reminded of Koyo Ozaki's haiku:\*

If I should die, let me die gracefully and breathe my last on an autumn morning when the grasses are still wet with dew.

The best novelist of the Meiji era composed it on his deathbed. If I should die, let me not die in winter at least, for the car will not move on the heavy snow. Poor Sagara's coffin was placed on a sledge and carried to the crematorium. What a pitiful sight it was, I thought, when I saw it drive off. I, too, wish to leave this earth in autumn when the grasses on the way are still wet with morning dew.

<sup>\*</sup> Koyo Ozaki, master writer of the Meiji era (1863-1905).













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